

# Blandin Foundation 2013 Rural Pulse™ Rural/Urban Research

May 2013



Blandin Foundation™  
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

RUSSELL  
HERDER



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## **Project Goal and Objectives**

Rural Pulse™ is a research study that has been commissioned by the Blandin Foundation since 1998 to gain a real-time snapshot of the concerns, perceptions and priorities of rural Minnesota residents. This initiative was last conducted in 2010 and served to identify trends within significant, complex subject areas including the economy, education, employment and quality of life. Past studies have also included canvassing opinions within the Foundation's "home" area as well as among Blandin Community Leadership and Blandin Reservation Community Leadership Program alumni.

The Foundation chose to undertake this effort again in 2013 to accomplish the following objectives:

- Understand the issues rural residents and leaders prioritize within their communities;
- Learn if community needs are being adequately addressed;
- Compare and contrast issue movement in comparison to past Rural Pulse studies; and, new for 2013,
- Gain an understanding of how the opinions of urban Minnesotans and those of ethnic and cultural differences compare to at-large findings.

The Blandin Foundation also is providing an urban dimension to this year's study, made possible through support from the Minnesota Community Foundation.

## Methodology

Independent research and communications consultant Russell Herder was retained to conduct this study. The survey instrument for Rural Pulse™ 2013 was developed in cooperation with Blandin Foundation leadership. Where possible and relevant, certain questions from past studies were repeated for comparison purposes.

Telephone interviews were conducted with rural Minnesotans March 7-15. A random sample of landline and wireless phone numbers across Minnesota was purchased for use in this study, excluding the seven-county Twin Cities metro area and those in zip codes with populations of 35,000 or more. The resulting total of 1,017 rural residents provides a statistical reliability of +/-3.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

The survey was also administered via e-mail to alumni of the Blandin Community Leadership Program and the Blandin Reservation Community Leadership Program between March 29 and April 8. A total of 560 surveys were completed for a statistical reliability of +/-4.3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

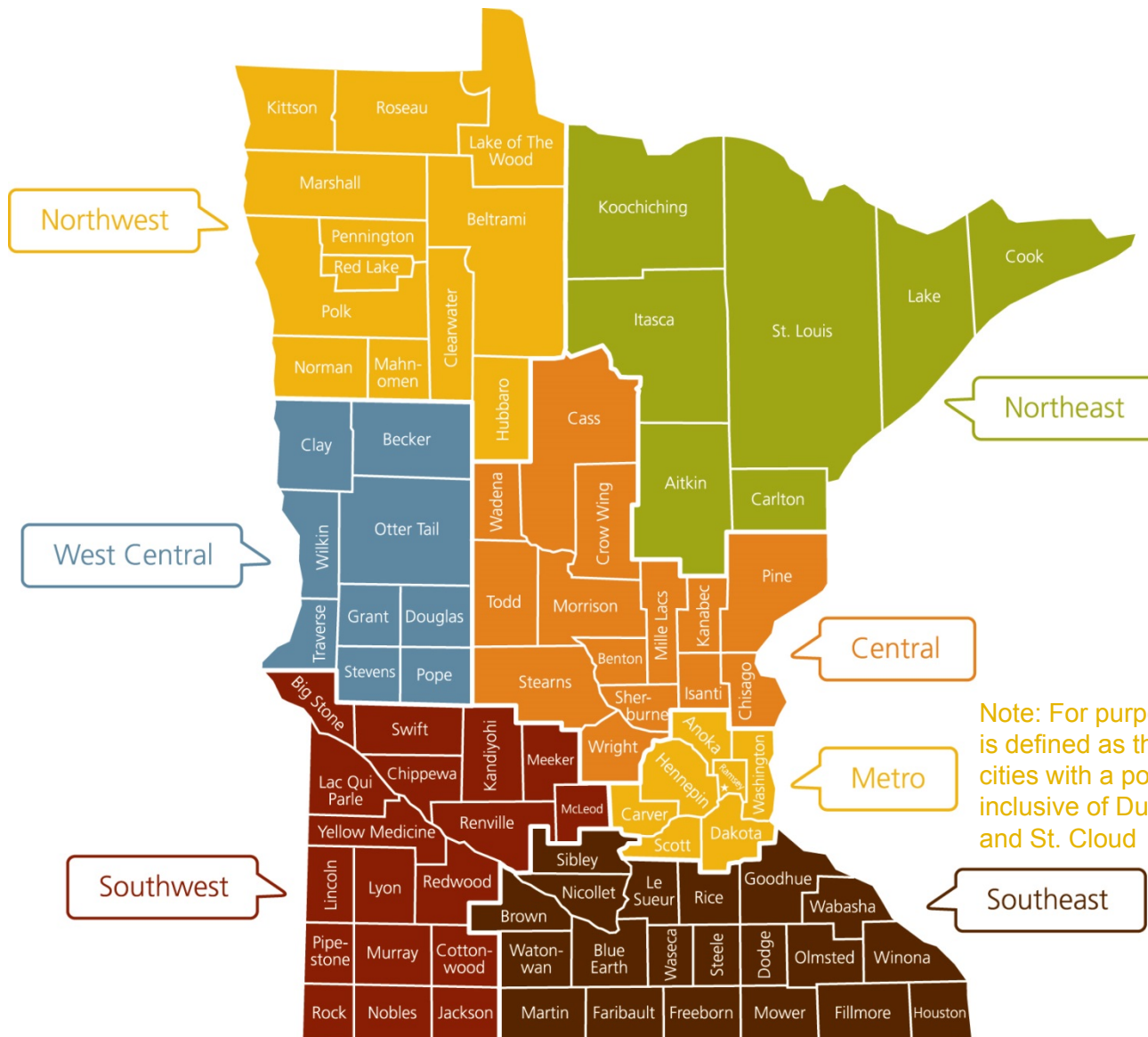
To assess the Blandin Foundation's home area – defined as the Grand Rapids and Itasca County area, including the communities of Blackduck, Hill City, Northome and Remer – a total of 335 telephone interviews were completed March 16-28, reflecting a statistical reliability of +/-5.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

New to Rural Pulse for 2013 was a study conducted among Minnesota residents within the seven-county metro area, as well as cities with a population of more than 35,000. Telephone interviews were conducted March 19-April 1 with 549 urban residents, providing a statistical reliability of +/-4.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

Also new in 2013 was an oversample study conducted March 23-April 30 with cultural groups within rural Minnesota, inclusive of African-American, Asian, Native American, Hispanic/Latino and immigrants (e.g., Hmong, Somali, Southeast Asian), as well as multi-cultural individuals. A total of 388 surveys were collected.

All completed questionnaires were processed and analyzed using SPSS software. The data was sorted by gender, age, income, region and business ownership, and weighted to reflect state demographics.

## Study Regions



Note: For purposes of this study, urban Minnesota is defined as the seven-county metro area plus cities with a population of more than 35,000, inclusive of Duluth, Mankato, Moorhead, Rochester and St. Cloud

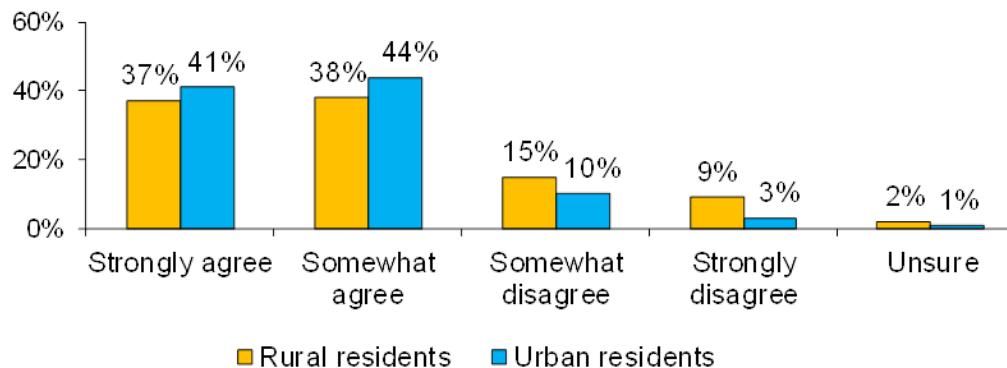
## Detailed Findings

## Community Perspective

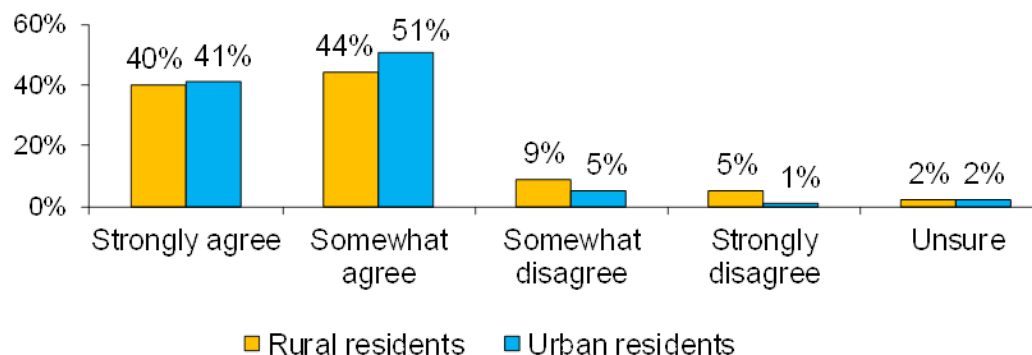
Three in four rural Minnesotans said that they believe their community is a vibrant place to live and work, while a quarter (24%) did not agree. Urban residents were more likely to have agreed with this sentiment (85% urban, 75% rural).

An even greater number of rural residents (84%) believed their community is strong, resilient and able to recover from difficult situations. Fourteen percent did not agree. Urban residents placed even more confidence in their city's strength and resilience (92% urban, 84% rural).

**My Community is a Vibrant Place to Live and Work**



**My Community is Strong, Resilient and Able to Recover from Difficult Situations**




Those in rural Minnesota who were the most likely to have said their community is vibrant and resilient were ages 18 to 24 and those with higher incomes.

**Believe Community is Vibrant and Resilient**

| Age                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                                                                      | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Believe community is a vibrant place to live and work                                | 78%   | 77%   | 72%   | 74%   | 71% |
| Believe community is strong, resilient and able to recover from difficult situations | 90%   | 85%   | 82%   | 85%   | 80% |

| Income                                                                               |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                                                                      | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Believe community is a vibrant place to live and work                                | 66%              | 74%                  | 80%                   | 83%                 |
| Believe community is strong, resilient and able to recover from difficult situations | 79%              | 87%                  | 88%                   | 88%                 |

*Strongly or somewhat agree*

 Highest agreement

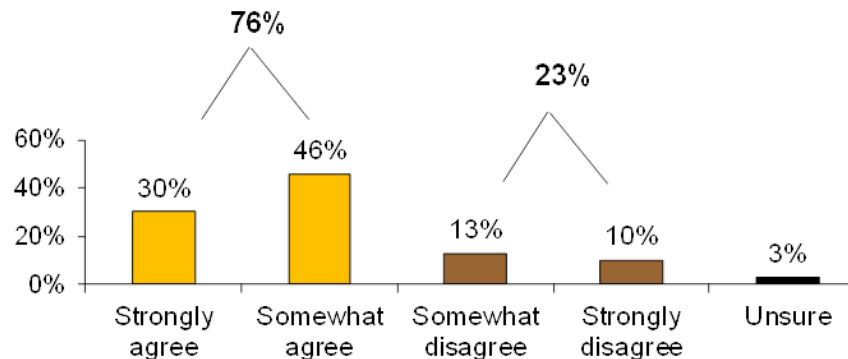


## Personal Ability to Affect Change

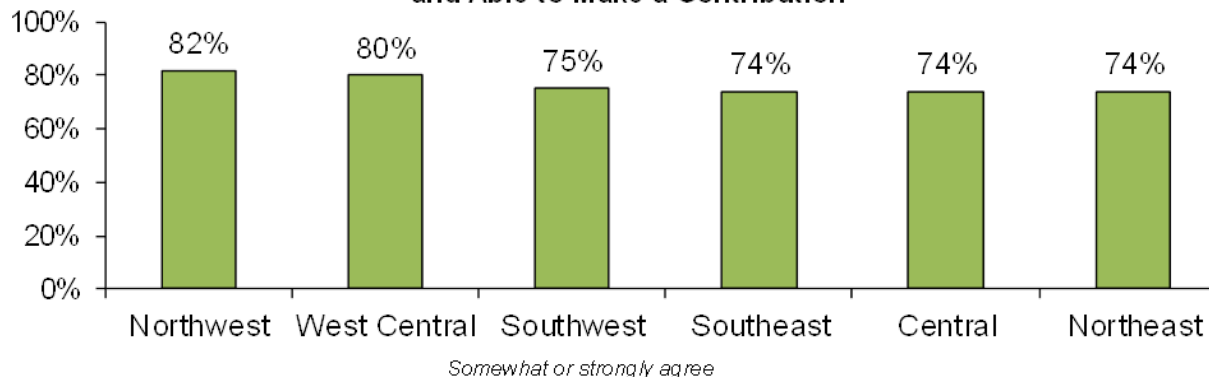
While rural Minnesotans expressed some concerns about their local community, they were optimistic about their ability to personally impact change. Those surveyed were asked whether they feel a sense of ownership over the direction of their community and whether they are able to make a contribution to its future. Three in four (76%) agreed, while 23 percent did not.

Residents in the Northwest region were the most likely to feel a sense of ownership and able to make a contribution to affect the future of the community they live in.

**Feel Sense of Ownership Over Community Direction, and Able to Make a Contribution to Its Future**



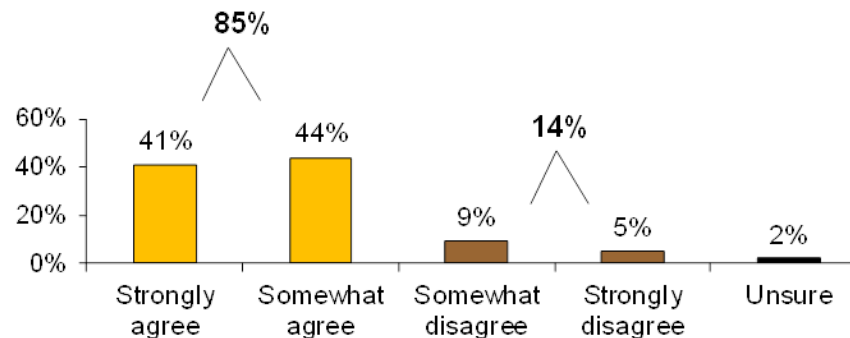
**Feel Ownership Over Direction of Community and Able to Make a Contribution**



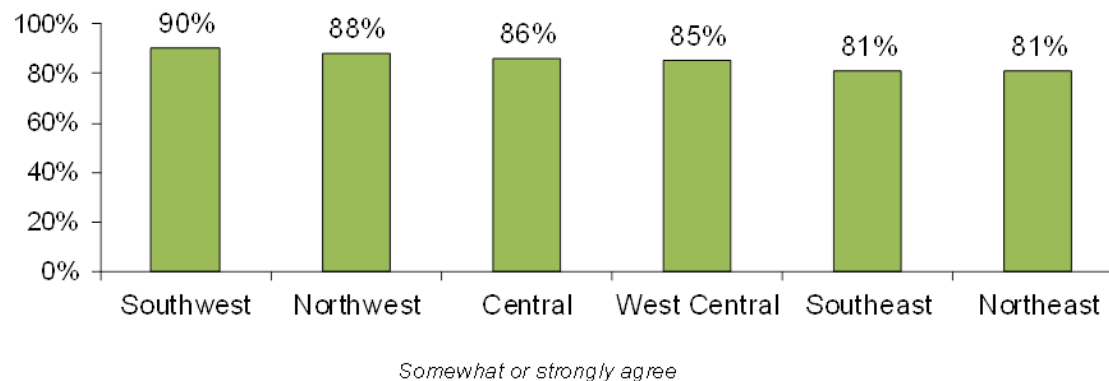
Those surveyed were asked whether they felt people like themselves are able to make an impact and improve local quality of life. Eighty-five percent of rural Minnesotans said they could, with only 14 percent believing that they do not have the ability to influence change.

Residents in the Southwest region were the most inclined to believe they could make a personal impact on local quality of life.

**People Like Me are Able to Make an Impact and Make My Community a Better Place to Live**



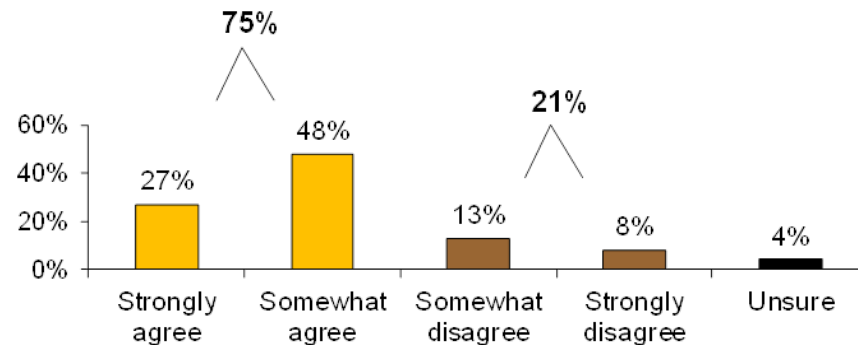
**Able to Make an Impact and Make Community a Better Place to Live**



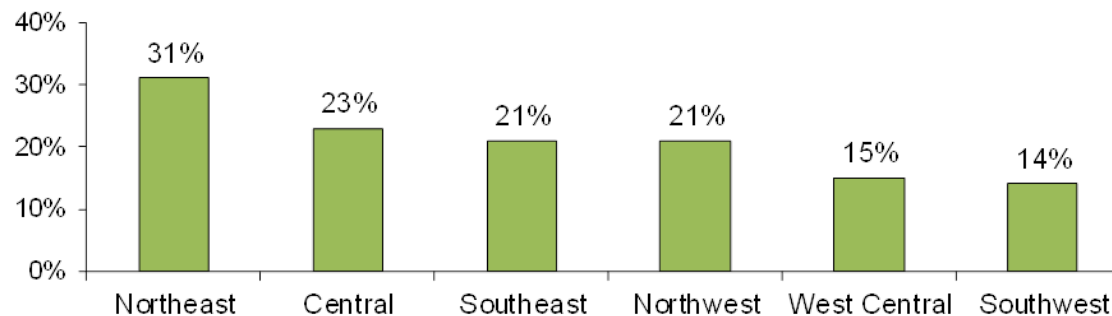
When asked whether they feel local community members work well together, however, confidence was not as strong. About one in five (21%) rural residents said that they do not feel their community works together cohesively, compared to 75 percent who said that they feel it does, similar to the 2010 study findings.

Residents in the Northeast region, in particular, expressed even less confidence (31% vs. 21%) in their community's ability to work together.

### Residents in My Community Work Together Effectively to Address Local Issues

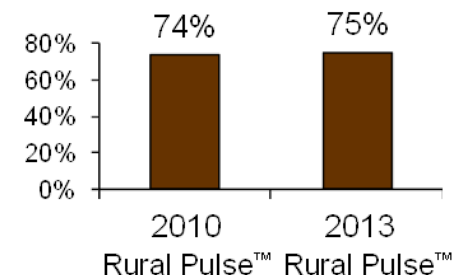


### Do Not Believe that Residents in Community Work Together Effectively



*Somewhat or strongly disagree that residents work together effectively*

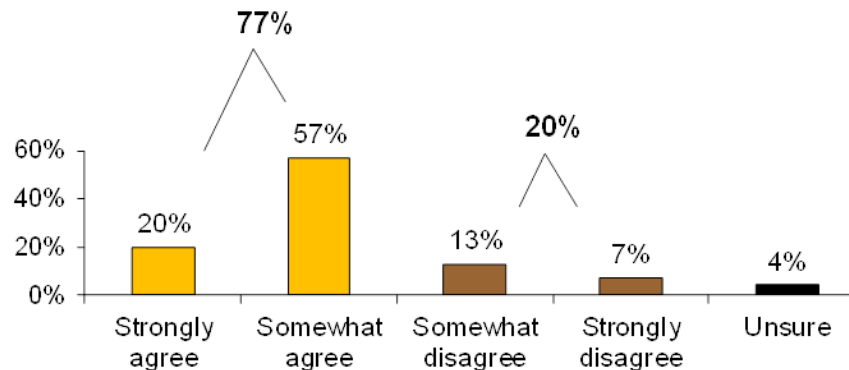
### Believe Community Works Together Effectively



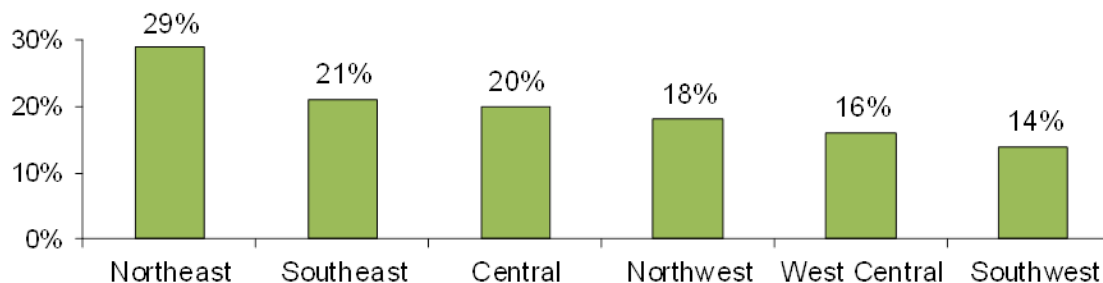
When rural Minnesotans were asked if they feel their community is able to work across differences, nearly four in five (77%) agreed, while one in five said they did not.

Residents in the Northeast region expressed the least confidence (29% vs. 20%) in their community's ability to work across differences.

### My Community is Able to Work Across Differences



### Do Not Believe that Community is Able to Work Across Differences



*Somewhat or strongly disagree that community is able to work across differences*

Demographically, those most likely to feel a sense of community ownership and ability to make a contribution were ages 18 to 24. They were also the most likely to feel their community can work across differences.


Those with the highest incomes felt most able to contribute to the success of their community.

### Sense of Ownership and Working Together

| Age                                                                                                                 |       |       |       |       |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                                                                                                     | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| I feel a sense of ownership over the direction of my community and feel that I am able to contribute to its future. | 84%   | 78%   | 76%   | 75%   | 69% |
| People like me are able to make an impact and make our community a better place to live.                            | 93%   | 88%   | 83%   | 86%   | 77% |
| My community is able to work across differences.                                                                    | 88%   | 77%   | 76%   | 73%   | 76% |

| Income                                                                                                              |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                                                                                                     | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| I feel a sense of ownership over the direction of my community and feel that I am able to contribute to its future. | 69%              | 79%                  | 80%                   | 82%                 |
| People like me are able to make an impact and make our community a better place to live.                            | 79%              | 87%                  | 87%                   | 91%                 |
| Residents in my community work together effectively to address local issues.                                        | 68%              | 76%                  | 77%                   | 85%                 |
| My community is able to work across differences.                                                                    | 72%              | 76%                  | 80%                   | 88%                 |

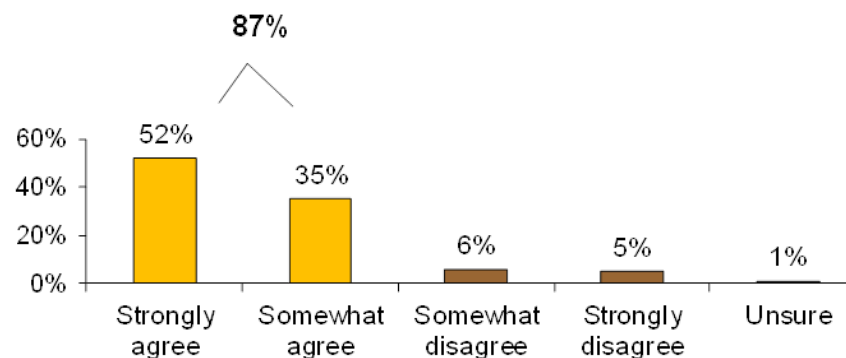
*Strongly or somewhat agree*

 Highest agreement

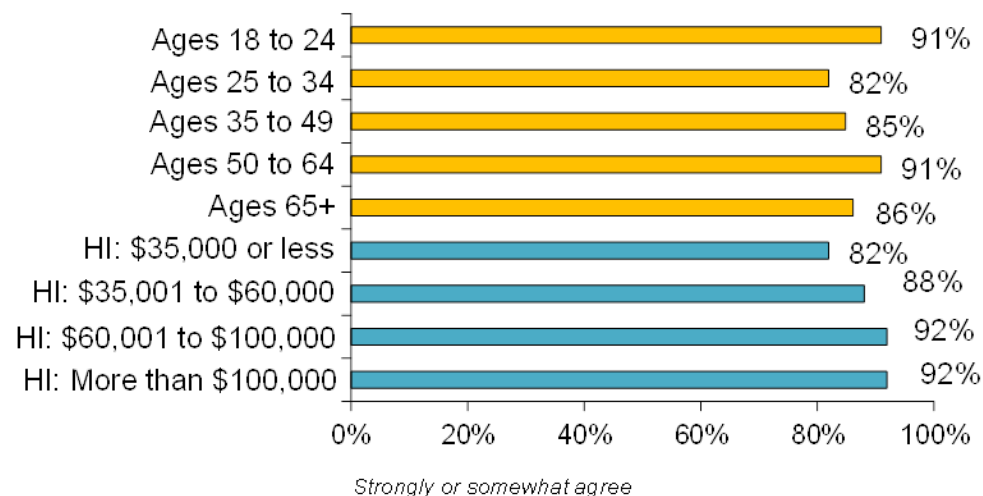
## Confidence Exists for Service Quality, Access

Most rural residents (87%) believed that their community offers equal access to essential services. Those with lower incomes, ages 25 to 34 and residents in Central Minnesota were the least likely to agree that all sectors within their community are equally served.

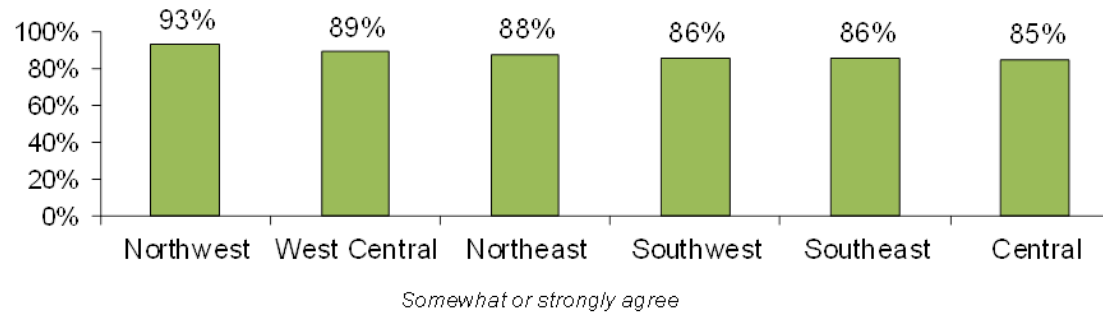
### All Residents Have Equal Access to Essential and Basic Services



### Believe Residents Have Equal Access to Essential and Basic Services

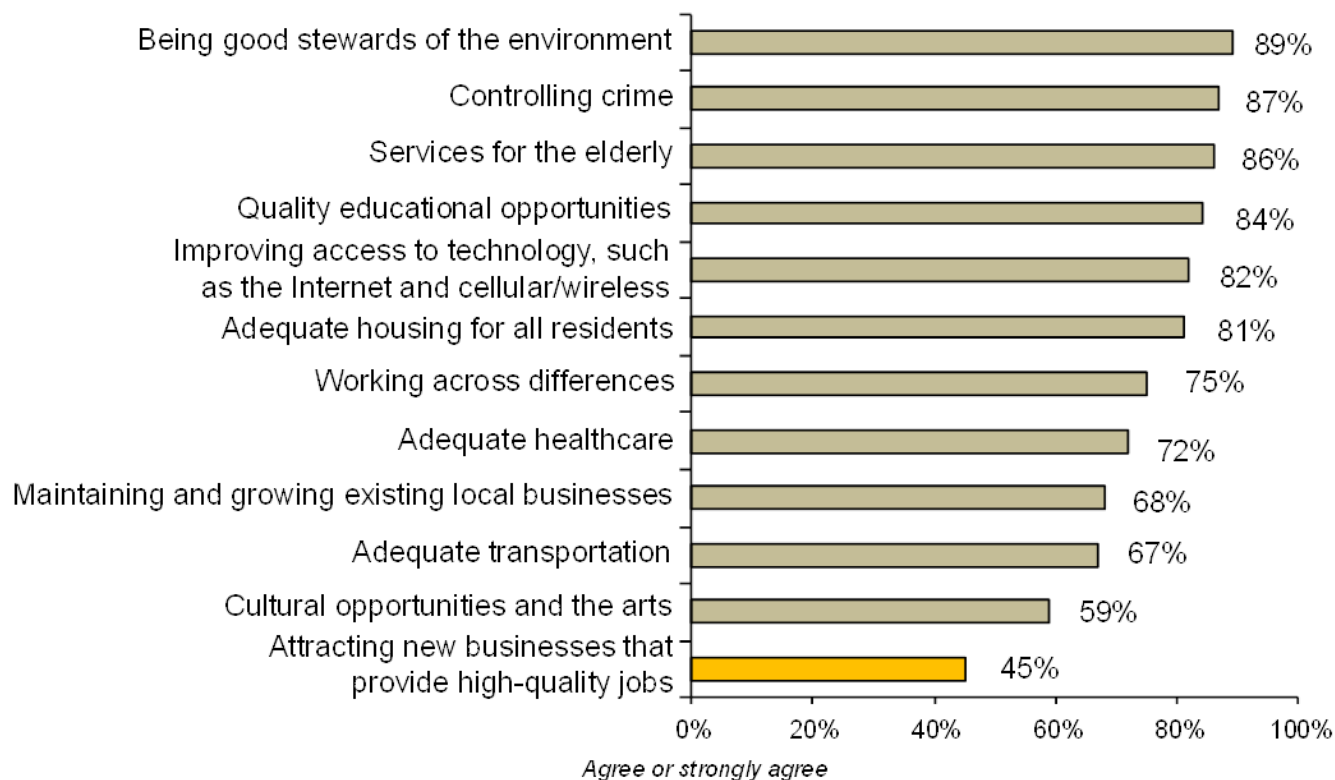


**Believe Residents Have Equal Access to Essential and Basic Services**



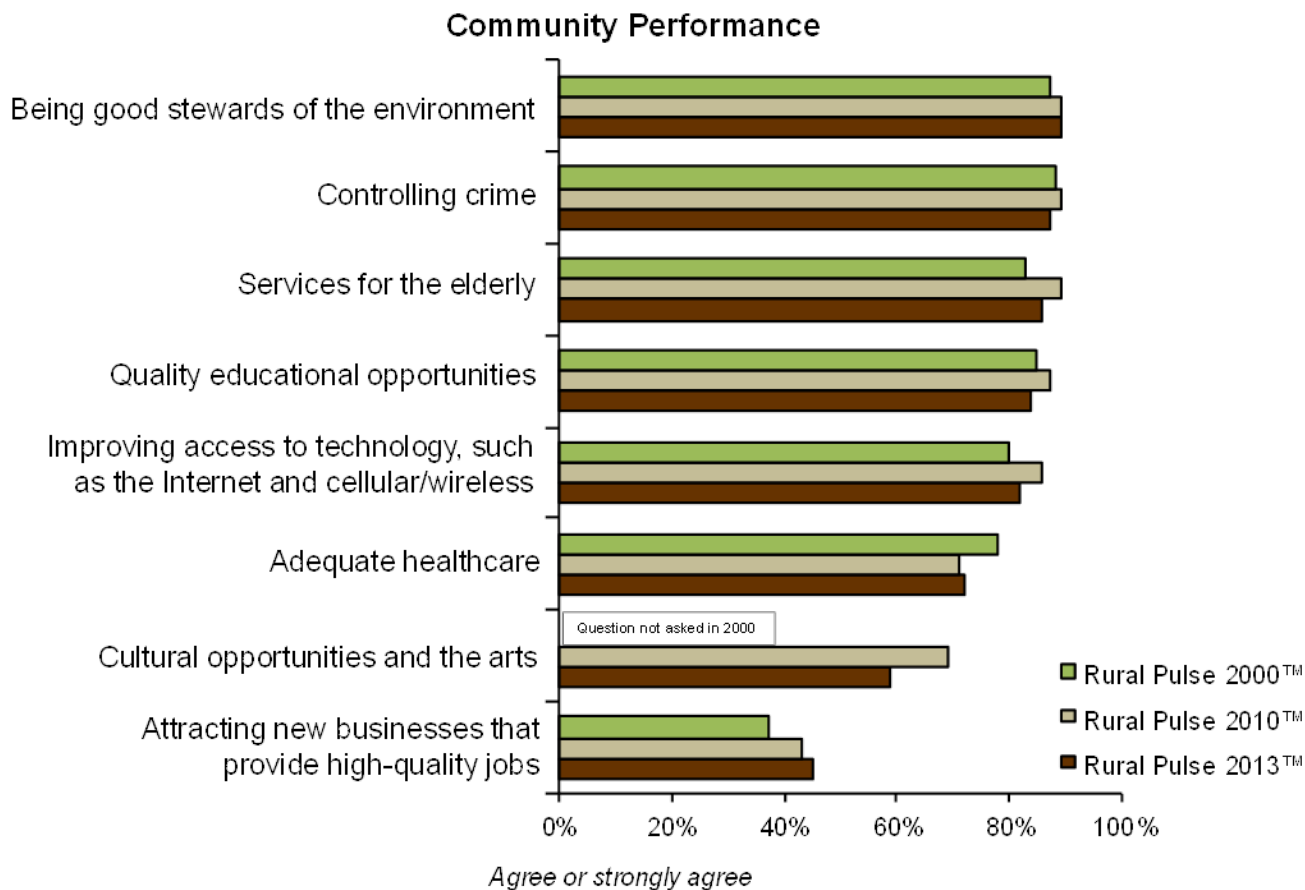
## Snapshot: Community Performance

Rural residents were asked to rate their agreement regarding how well they believe their local community handles several community issues. The most highly rated were environmental stewardship, crime control, services for the elderly, education, improving access to technology and residential housing. They gave the lowest community ratings for attracting new businesses that provide ample living-wage jobs. Other issues mentioned by rural Minnesotans that were considered important to their community included taxes, spending and governance, recreational opportunities, social/moral issues, agriculture, church/religion, race and cultural issues, youth opportunities, immigration, housing and parks/playgrounds, among others.





For the most part, there was little change between the 2013 and 2010 findings, although rural residents said that they were less satisfied with the number of cultural opportunities and the arts in their community, and there was a slight improvement in how they viewed their community's ability to attract businesses that provide high-quality jobs.



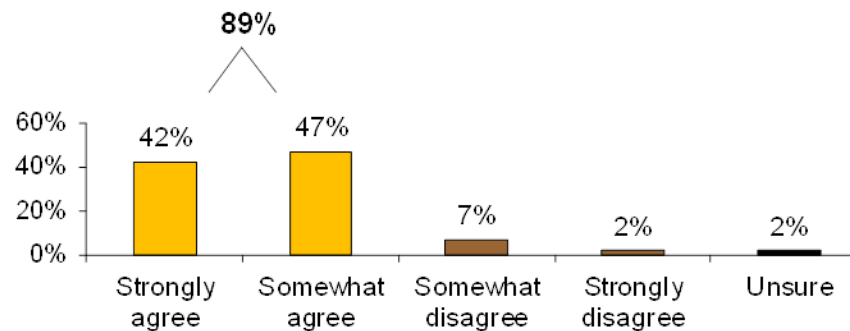
## The Environment

About nine in 10 (89%) rural residents said they believe their community to be a good steward of the environment. Those ages 18 to 24 were the least likely to agree, however.

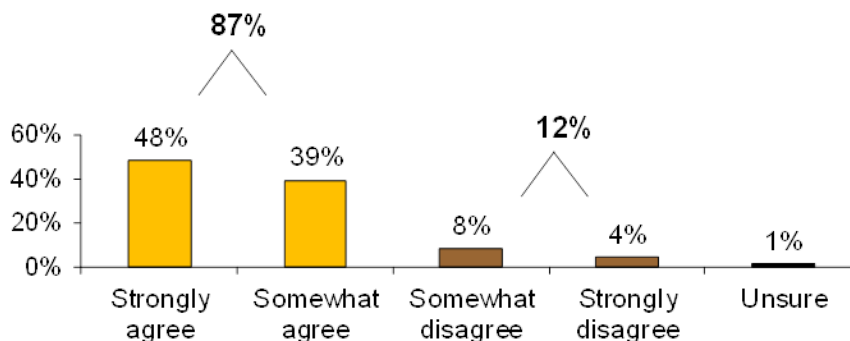
## Crime Control

Most (87%) rural residents said that they have confidence in their community's ability to control crime. Residents in the Northeast region were the least likely to feel such, however.

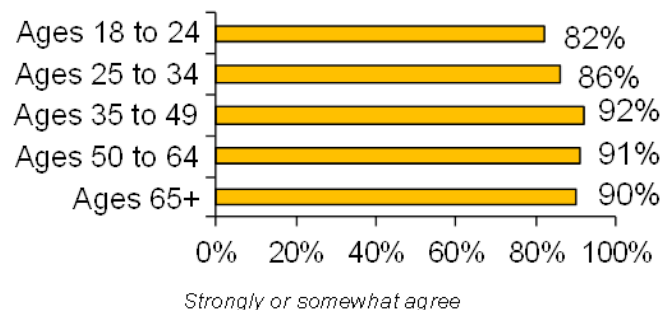
### My Community is a Good Steward of the Environment



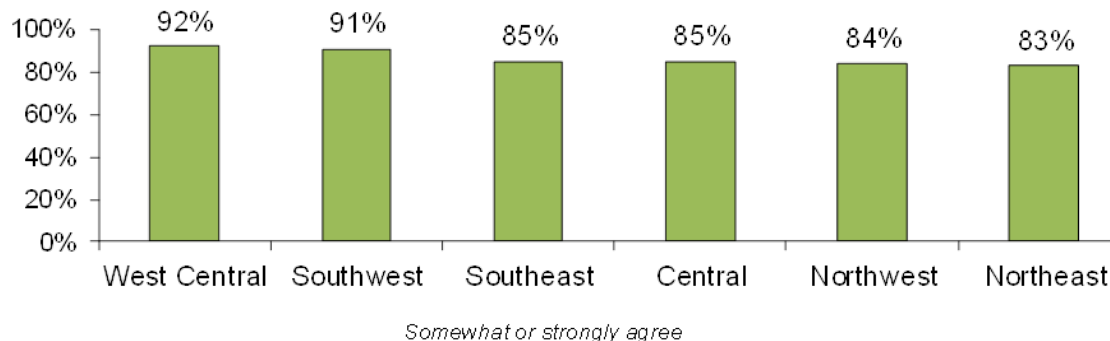
### My Community Does a Good Job Controlling Crime



### Believe their Community Is a Good Steward of the Environment



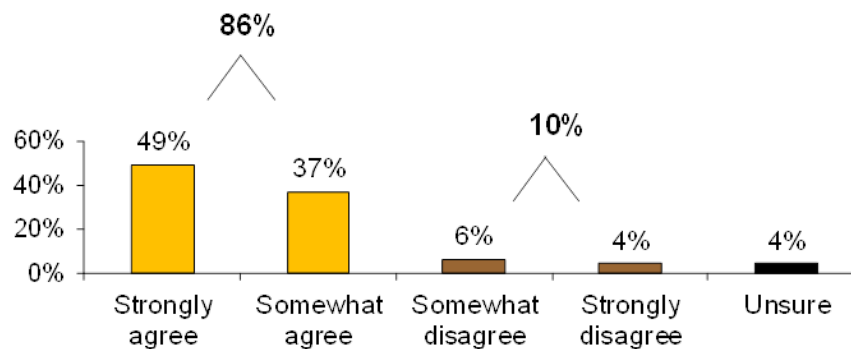
### Believe Community Does a Good Job Controlling Crime



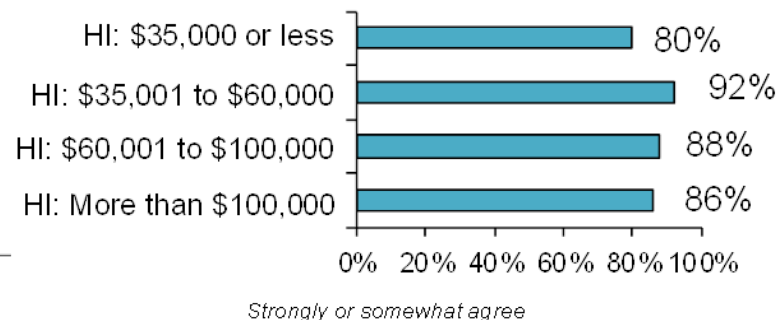
### Services for the Elderly

Most (86%) rural residents also said that they have confidence in their community's ability to provide services for the elderly, although those with the lowest incomes were the least likely to agree with such.

#### My Community Does a Good Job Providing Services for Elderly



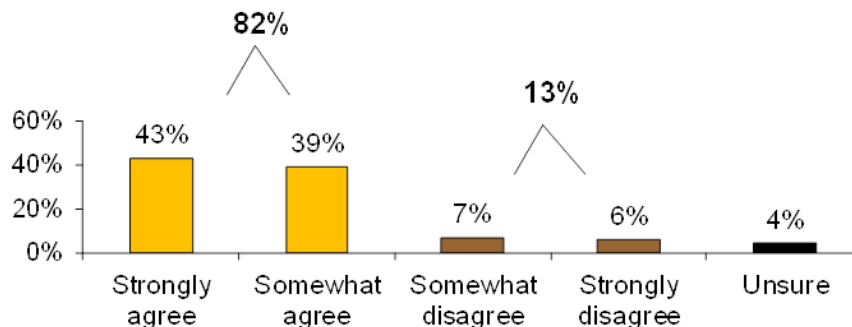
#### Believe Community Provides Adequate Services for Elderly



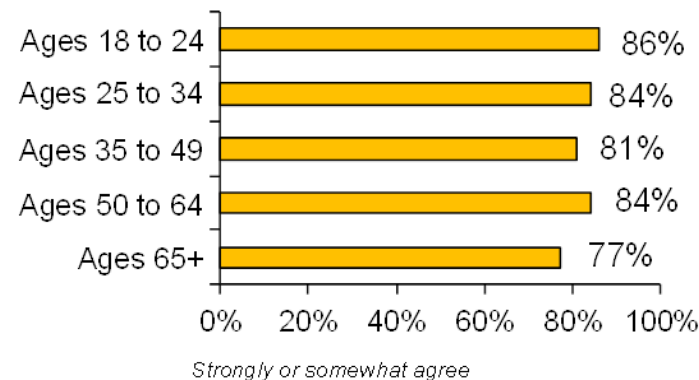
## Technology

More than four in five (82%) felt their community does an agreeable job at improving access to such technology as the Internet and wireless services. Forty-three percent of rural residents strongly agreed and 39 percent somewhat agreed that their community has improved access to technology, with 13 percent disagreeing. Those ages 65+ and residents of Central Minnesota were slightly less satisfied than others.

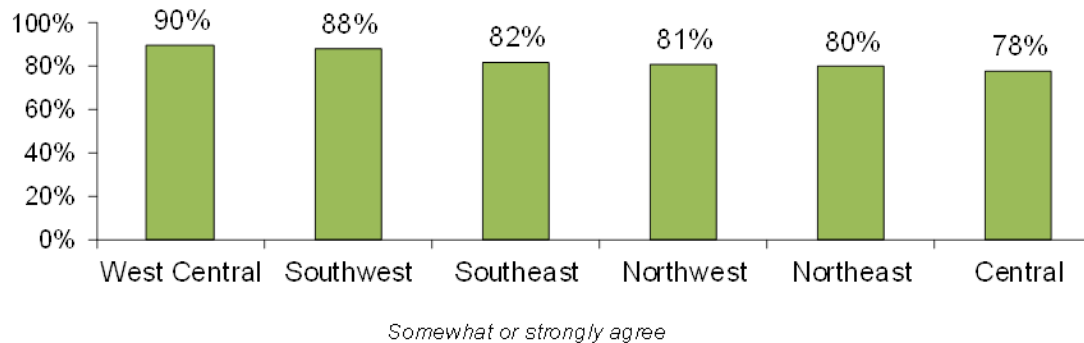
**My Community Does a Good Job Providing Improved Access to Technology**



**Believe Community Provides Improved Access to Technology**



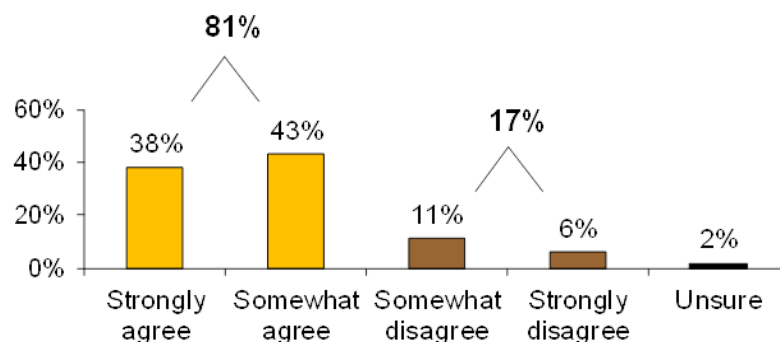
**Believe Community Provides Improved Access to Technology**



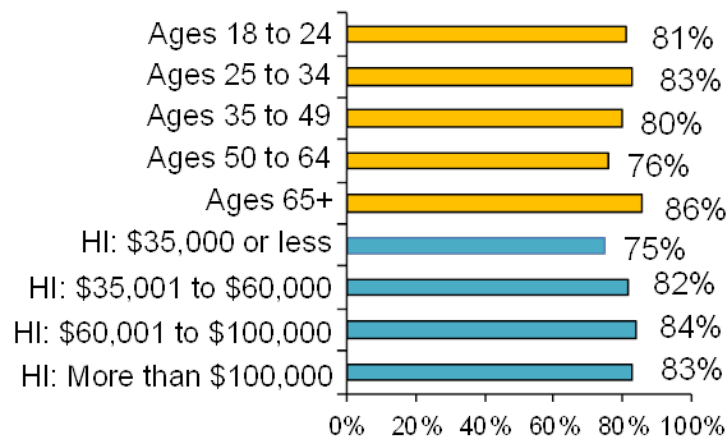
## Housing

Although four in five (81%) agreed that there is sufficient housing in their community, 17 percent were concerned about adequate availability. Those most likely to feel their community lacks housing were ages 50 to 64, those with the lowest incomes and residents of northern Minnesota, particularly in the Northeast region.

**My Community Provides Adequate Housing**

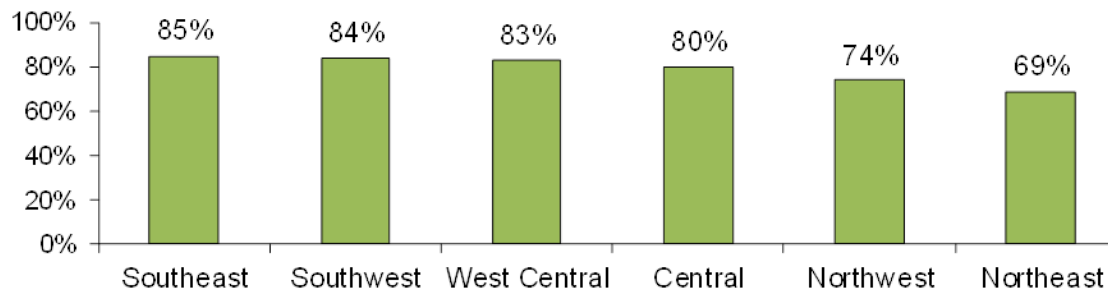


**Believe Community Provides Adequate Housing**



*Strongly or somewhat agree*

**Believe Community Provides Adequate Housing**



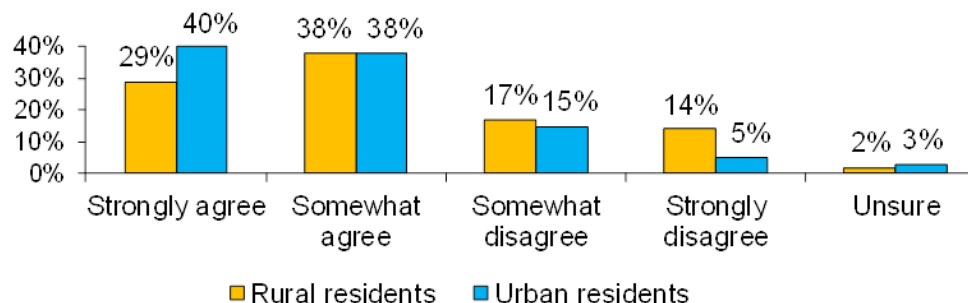
*Somewhat or strongly agree*

## Transportation

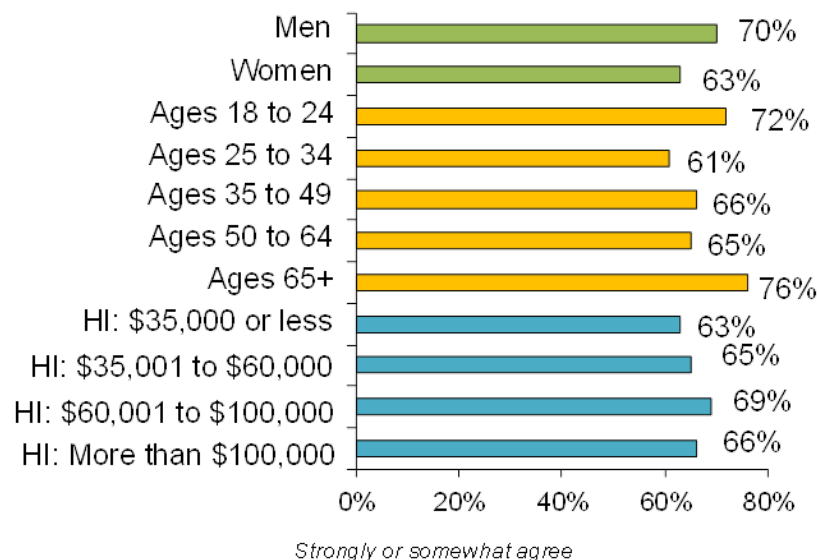
Transportation was a concern for nearly one in three rural Minnesotans. While 67 percent agreed that their community provides adequate transportation opportunities, 31 percent did not feel that this is the case. Urban area residents were more likely than those in rural Minnesota (78% urban, 67% rural) to feel they have access to adequate transportation.

Women, those ages 25 to 34, those with the lowest incomes and Northeastern Minnesota residents were the most concerned about adequate rural transportation.

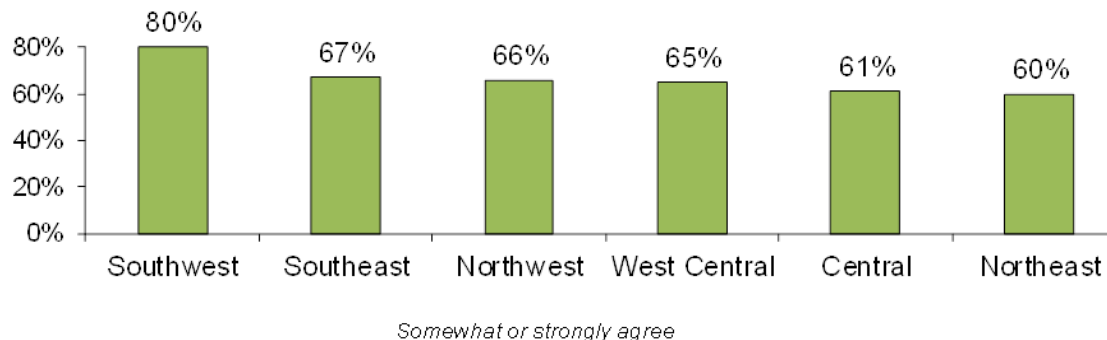
### My Community Does a Good Job Providing Adequate Transportation



### Believe Community Provides Adequate Transportation



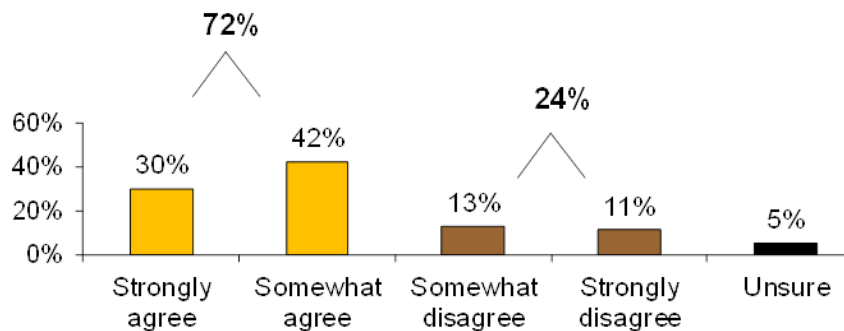
### Believe Community Provides Adequate Transportation



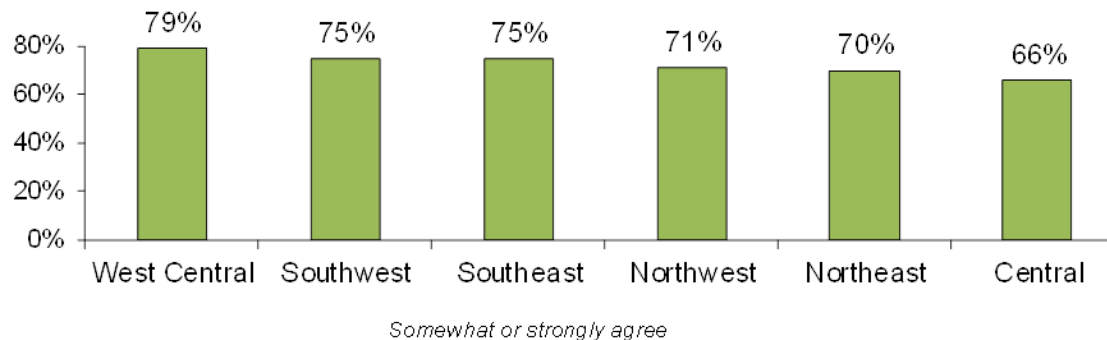
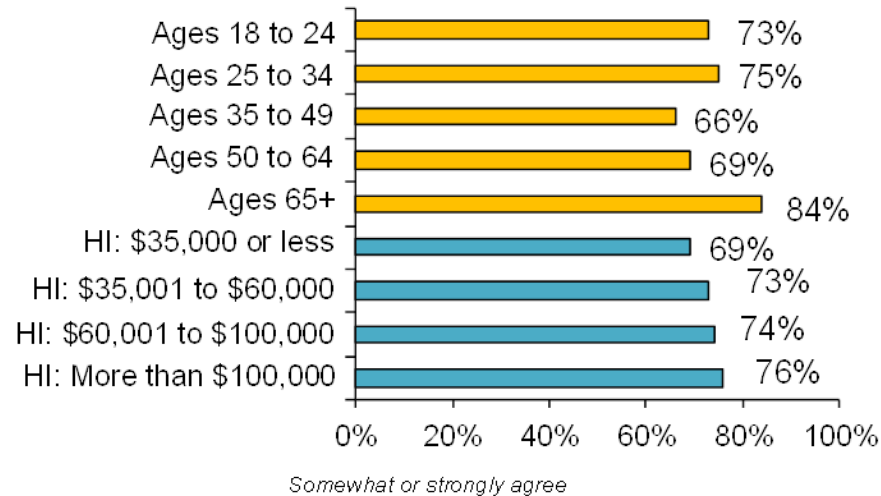
### Healthcare

Healthcare was a concern for about one in four rural Minnesotans. While 72 percent agreed that their community provides adequate healthcare opportunities, 24 percent did not feel that this is the case. Those ages 35 to 64, with the lowest incomes and residing in Central Minnesota were the least confident regarding access to healthcare.

### My Community Provides Adequate Healthcare Opportunities



**Believe Community Provides Adequate Healthcare Opportunities**



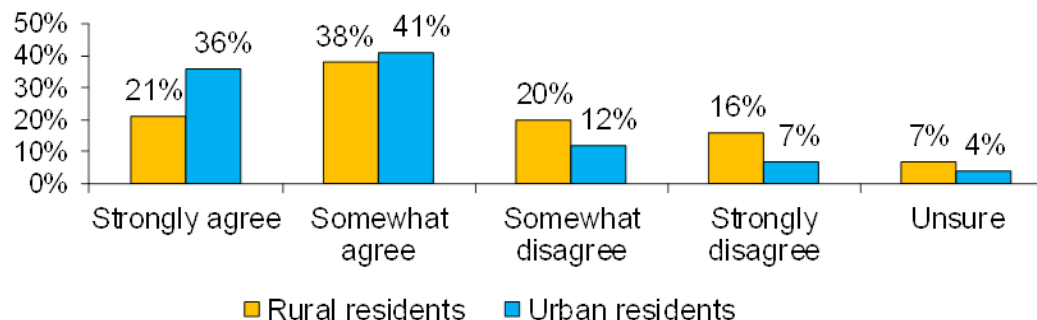


## Culture and the Arts

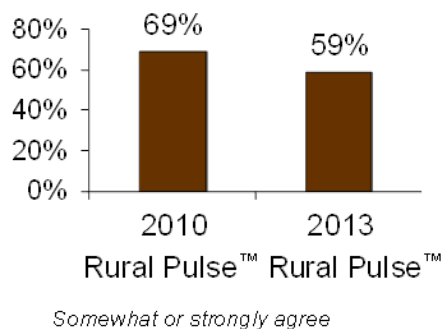
Availability of adequate cultural and arts opportunities was a concern for 36 percent of rural Minnesota residents, with only three in five (59%) having felt local needs are being met. These findings represent a 10 percentage point deterioration from 2010.

Those most likely to have felt cultural and arts opportunities are lacking in their community were business owners and those with the lowest incomes.

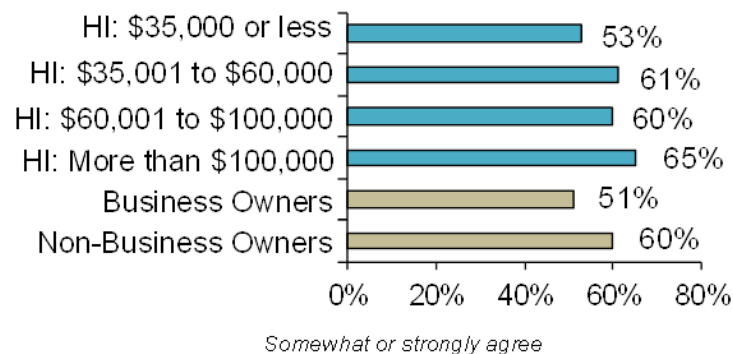
### My Community Does a Good Job Providing Cultural Opportunities and the Arts



### Believe Community Provides Adequate Cultural Opportunities and the Arts

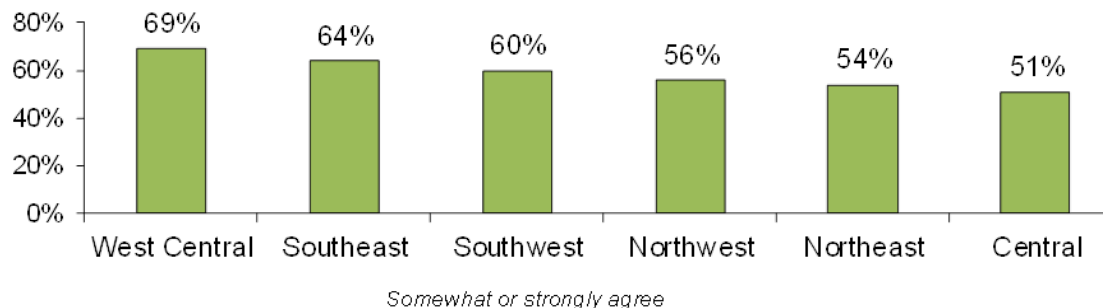


### Believe Community Provides Adequate Cultural Opportunities and the Arts



Residents in West Central Minnesota were more likely to be satisfied with local cultural opportunities and the arts, while about half (51%) of those in Central Minnesota noted dissatisfaction with the local availability of such.

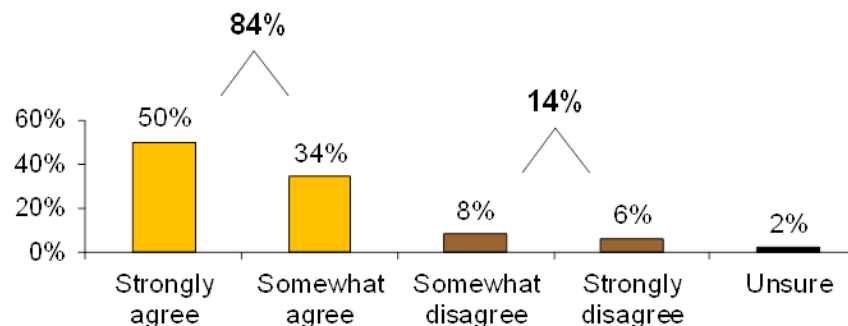
### Believe Community Provides Adequate Cultural Opportunities and the Arts



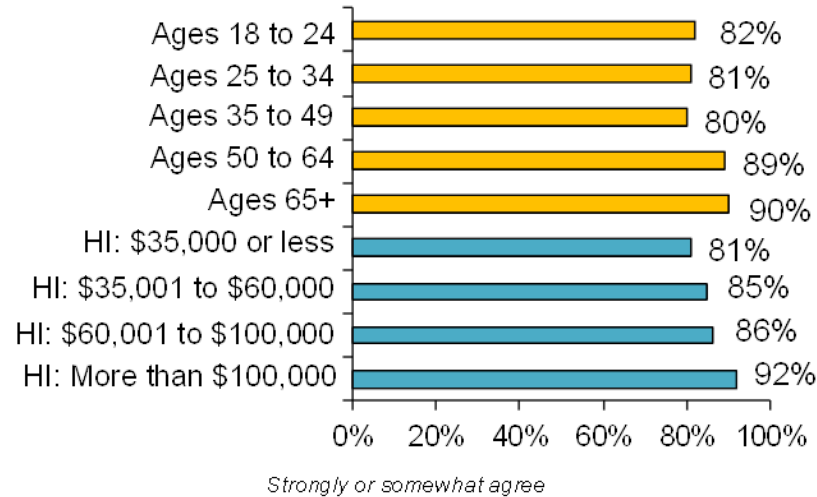
### Education

The majority (84%) of rural Minnesotans believed their community provides quality educational opportunities, with 50 percent strongly agreeing and 34 percent somewhat agreeing. Fourteen percent disagreed that their community provides adequate educational opportunities. Those ages 18 to 49, with the lowest incomes and residing in the Central region cited the least amount of confidence in their local educational system.

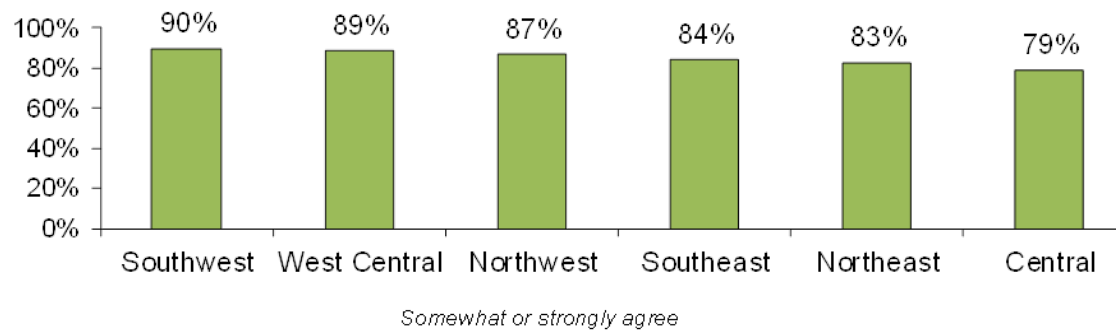
### My Community Provides Quality Educational Opportunities



**Believe Community Provides Quality Educational Opportunities**



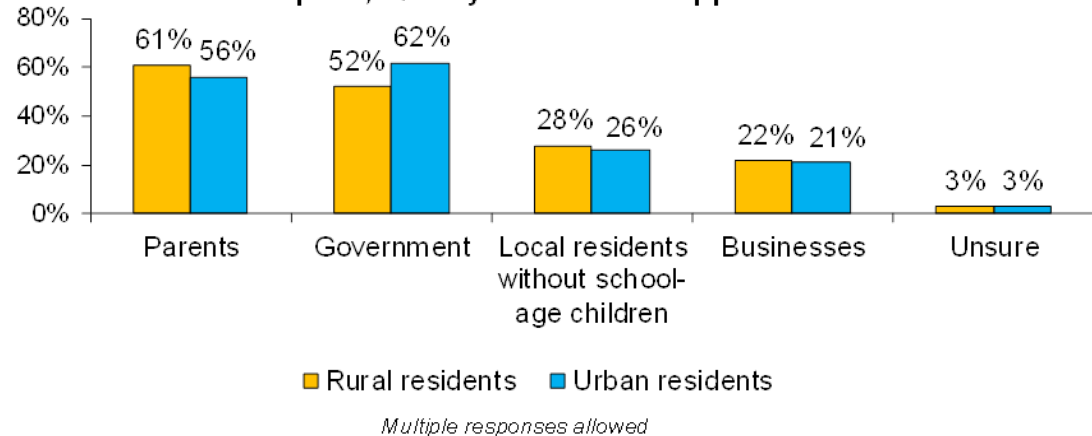
**Believe Community Provides Quality Educational Opportunities**



When asked who they feel is responsible for ensuring that adequate, quality educational opportunities are available in their community, three in five (61%) said they feel it is up to parents. About half (52%) also believed the government should be involved in such support. Urban area residents (62%) were more likely than their rural counterparts to place the responsibility on government. Twenty-eight percent of rural respondents felt local residents without school-age children should also play a role in assisting with this effort, while 22 percent also named business owners.

Household income was a factor in who was believed to be most responsible for providing quality education. Those with the lowest incomes were more likely to place the responsibility on government than overall rural residents, and those with the highest incomes were most likely to place that responsibility on parents.

**Who is Responsible for Ensuring Adequate, Quality Educational Opportunities**



|                                             | Income           |                      |                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                             | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Parents                                     | 60%              | 62%                  | 58%                   | 63%                 |
| Government                                  | 57%              | 49%                  | 52%                   | 54%                 |
| Local residents without school-age children | 25%              | 27%                  | 34%                   | 31%                 |
| Businesses                                  | 21%              | 20%                  | 25%                   | 27%                 |

|         | Male | Female |
|---------|------|--------|
| Parents | 57%  | 65%    |

*Multiple responses allowed*

■ Highest percentage within each role

Age also played a role in who was believed to be most responsible for providing quality education, with those ages 18 to 24 placing the burden on government and those ages 65+ placing the majority of the responsibility on parents. Women were also more likely to feel parents hold the main responsibility (65% women vs. 57% men).

**Responsible for  
Ensuring Educational Opportunities**

|                                             | Age   |       |       |       |     |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                             | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Parents                                     | 45%   | 52%   | 64%   | 65%   | 72% |
| Government                                  | 69%   | 57%   | 56%   | 52%   | 30% |
| Local residents without school-age children | 25%   | 29%   | 28%   | 30%   | 30% |
| Businesses                                  | 16%   | 21%   | 24%   | 26%   | 19% |

Residents in Southwestern Minnesota were more likely than rural residents overall to feel that people without school-age children should help with providing local educational opportunities (36% vs. 28%). Those in the Northeast region placed a higher emphasis on assistance from businesses compared to the overall rural population base (30% vs. 22%).

|                                             | Southwest | Southeast | Central | West Central | Northwest | Northeast |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Local residents without school-age children | 36%       | 26%       | 25%     | 26%          | 26%       | 33%       |
| Businesses                                  | 25%       | 22%       | 21%     | 17%          | 17%       | 30%       |

|            | Business Owner | Non-Business Owner |
|------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Parents    | 71%            | 59%                |
| Businesses | 27%            | 21%                |

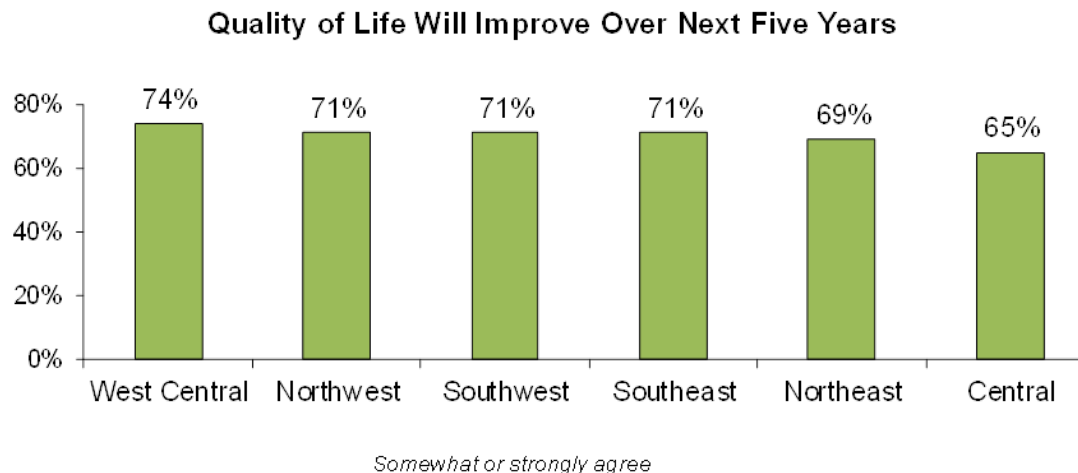
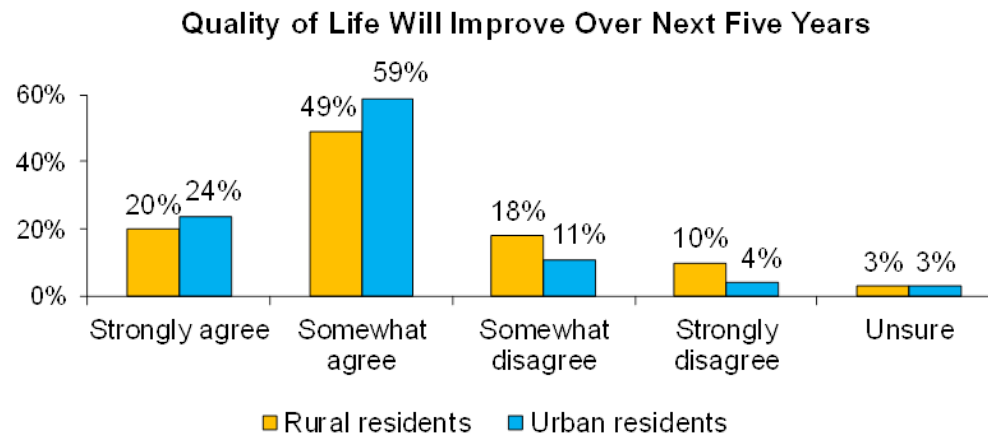
*Multiple responses allowed*

■ Highest percentage within each role

## Optimism Exists About Rural Quality of Life

Rural Minnesotans were also queried about their community's quality of life. Nearly seven in 10 (69%) rural Minnesotans felt quality of life would improve over the next five years, while 28 percent felt it would not.

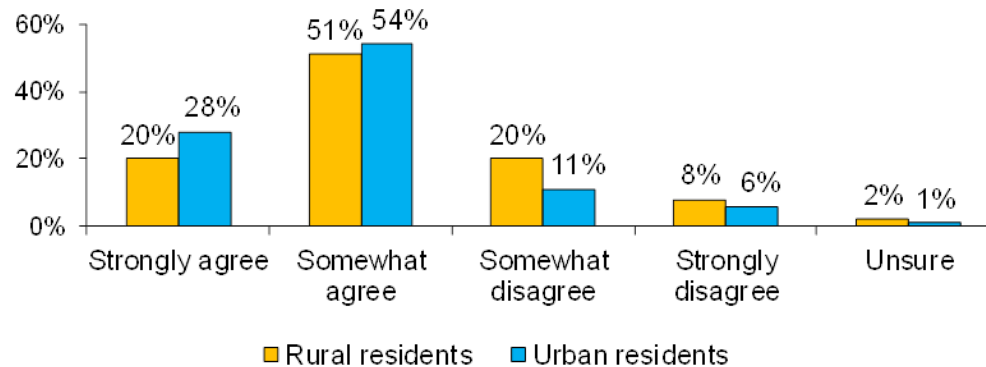
Urban Minnesotans had a much more positive outlook for improved quality of life than those in rural areas (83% urban, 69% rural). Residents in the Central region were the least confident that quality of life in their community would improve.



When asked how optimistic they feel about their community's future, again, seven in 10 (71%) rural respondents felt positive, while 28 percent did not share that sentiment.

Those in urban areas showed more optimism (82% urban, 71% rural), while residents in the Central region were the least optimistic about their community's future.

### Optimism About Community's Future



### Lack Optimism About Community's Future



*Not very or not at all optimistic*

Those ages 65+ were the least likely to believe quality of life will improve over the next five years, while those ages 35 to 49 showed the least optimism for the community's future overall.

Those with the lowest incomes also had the least optimism about quality of life and the future of their community.

Business owners were also less likely to feel optimistic about their community's future.

### Quality of Life and Future of Community

| Age                                                                   |       |       |       |       |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                                                       | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Quality of life in my community will improve over the next five years | 78%   | 74%   | 69%   | 65%   | 63% |
| Optimistic about the future of your community                         | 74%   | 74%   | 66%   | 70%   | 69% |

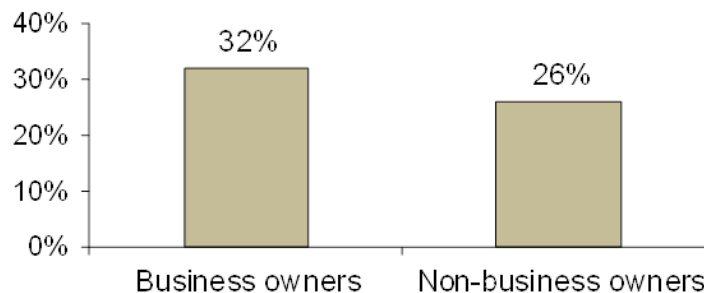
*Somewhat or strongly agree*

| Income                                                                |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                                                       | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Quality of life in my community will improve over the next five years | 64%              | 71%                  | 73%                   | 78%                 |
| Optimistic about the future of your community                         | 62%              | 75%                  | 77%                   | 78%                 |

*Somewhat or strongly agree*

■ Highest agreement

### Lack Optimism About Future of Community



*Not very or not at all optimistic*

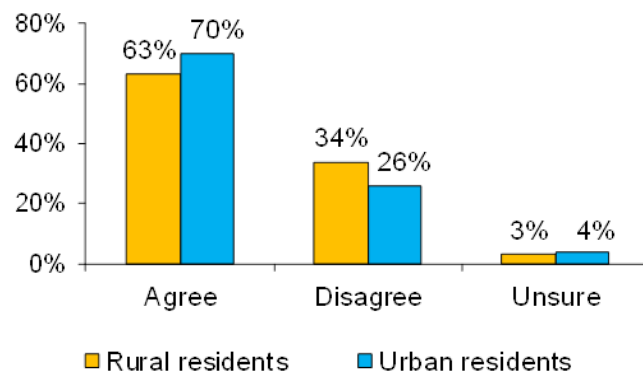


## Rural Voice

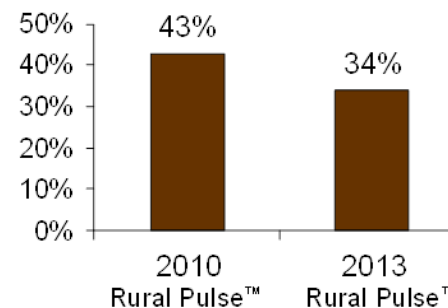
Rural Minnesotans expressed concern about the priority placed upon their interests. When asked if the needs and well-being of rural Minnesota communities are as important to legislators and policymakers as those of metropolitan cities, a third (34%) were of the opinion that they are not, although that is a nine percent uptick from 2010 findings. Sixty-three percent were comfortable that their voice is being heard.

Urban area residents (70%) were more likely to agree that rural Minnesota is important to lawmakers.

**The Needs and Well-Being of Rural Minnesota Communities are as Important to Legislators and Policymakers**

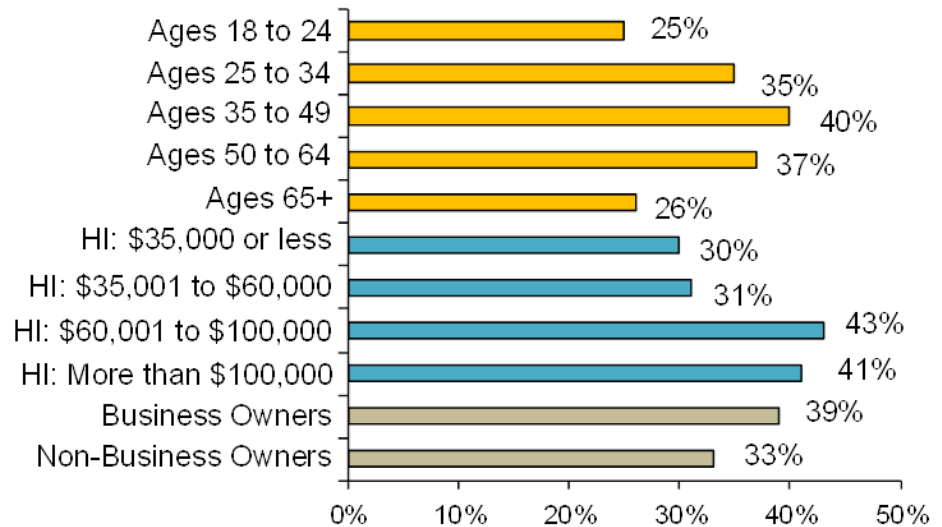


**Do Not Believe the Needs and Well-Being of Rural Minnesota Communities are as Important to Legislators and Policymakers**

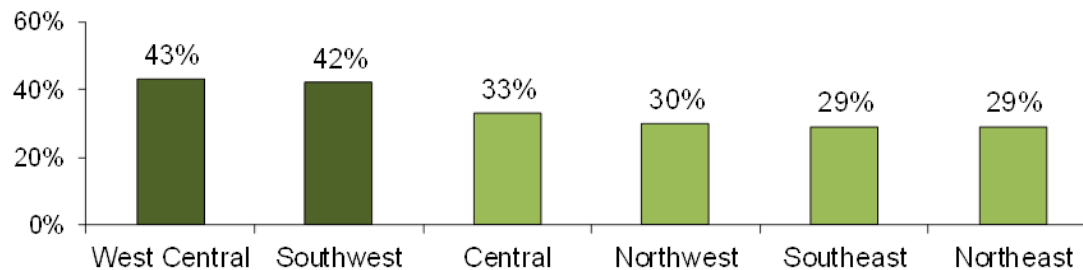


Those ages 25 to 64 and with higher incomes were the least likely to believe the needs of rural communities are adequately prioritized. Those residing in the West Central and Southwest regions also expressed the greatest concern about how their needs are perceived compared to rural Minnesotans overall.

**Do Not Believe the Needs and Well-Being of Rural Minnesota Communities are as Important to Legislators and Policymakers**

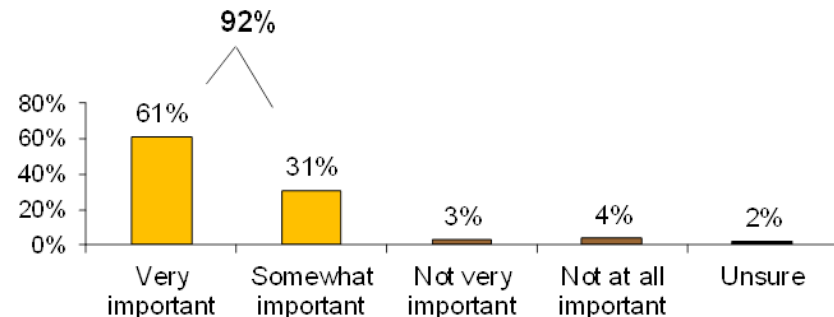


**Do Not Believe the Needs and Well-Being of Rural Minnesota Communities are as Important to Legislators and Policymakers**

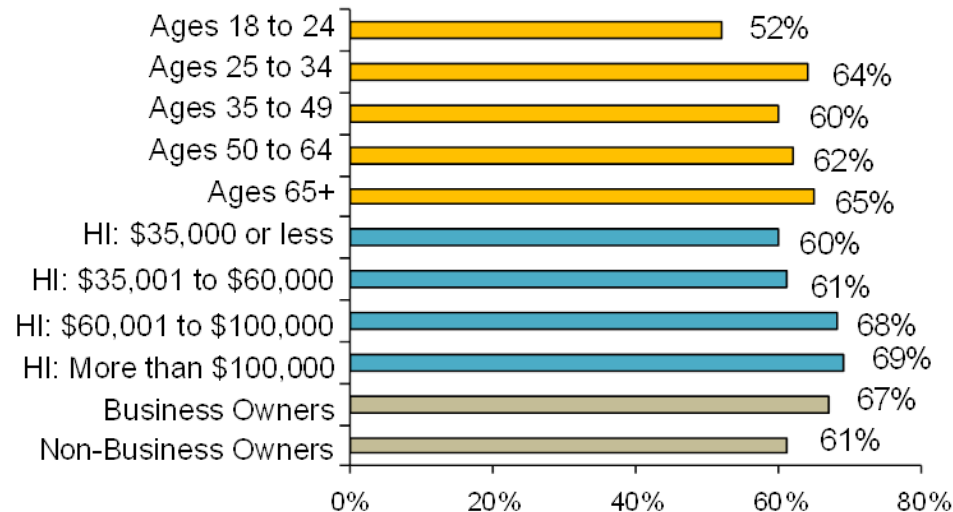


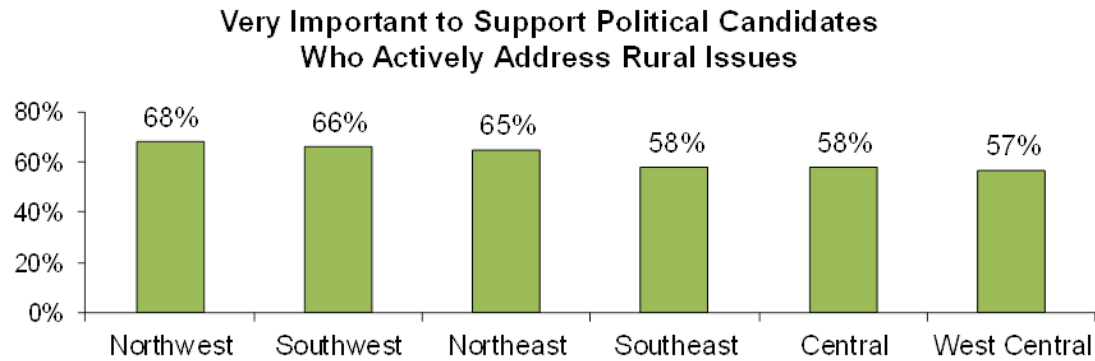
Ninety-two percent of rural Minnesota residents said it is important to support political candidates who actively address rural issues. While more than nine in 10 agree that supporting political candidates who address rural issues is important, those who place the highest importance on support were ages 25+, those with higher incomes and residents in the Northwest region.

### Importance of Supporting Political Candidates Who Actively Address Rural Issues



### Very Important to Support Political Candidates Who Actively Address Rural Issues



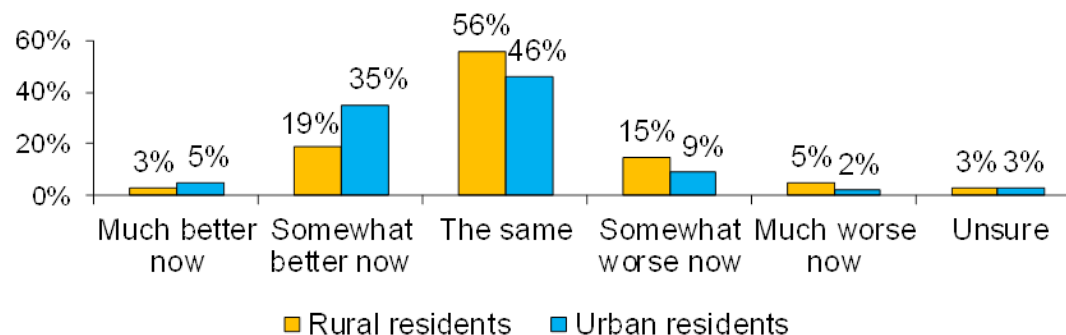


## Economic Concerns Continue, But Show Slight Improvement

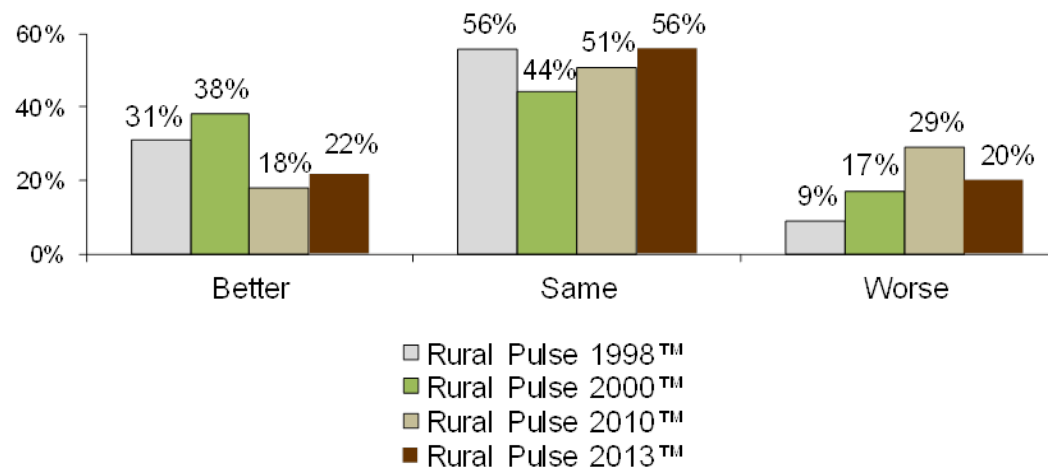
Survey participants were asked to gauge the condition of their community's economy now as compared to a year ago. Twenty-two percent of rural respondents said that they felt it had improved, 56 percent believed it stayed the same, and 20 percent indicated that their local economy had worsened over the last year. Belief that the economic condition had declined was nine percent lower than opinions expressed in Rural Pulse 2010, however.

Urban Minnesota residents were nearly twice as likely as their rural counterparts (40% urban, 22% rural) to have said their local economy has seen improvement over the past year.

Condition of Local Economy Compared to One Year Ago



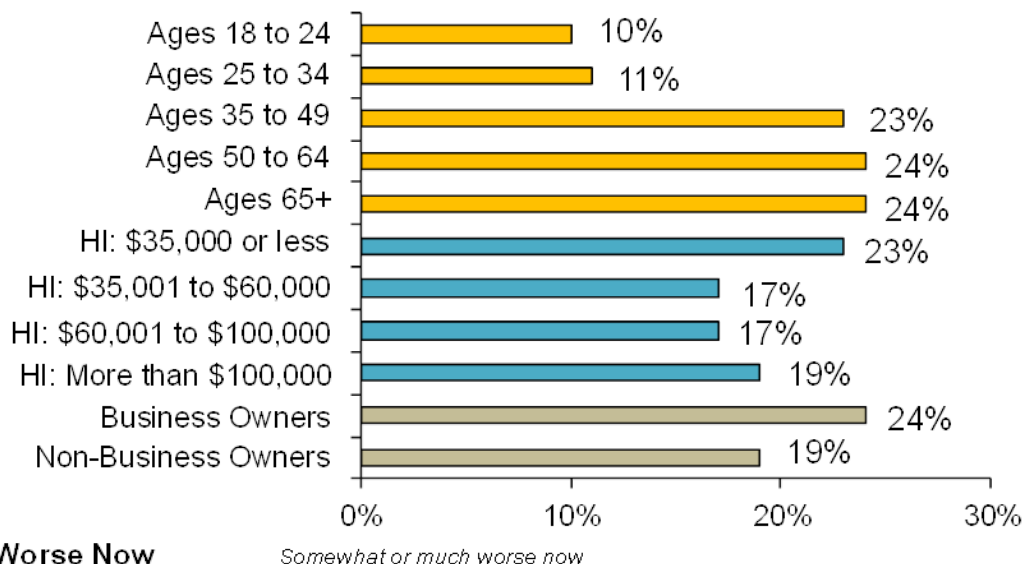
Change in Condition of Economy



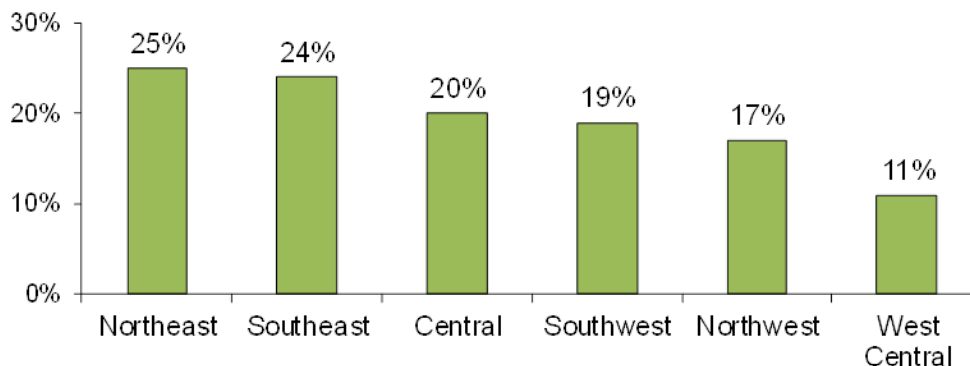
Rural residents ages 35+, those with incomes of \$35,000 or less, and business owners voiced the least confidence in their community's current economy.

Those residing in the Northeast and Southeast regions were also more skeptical about the improvement of the economy.

### Condition of Economy is Worse Now Compared to One Year Ago

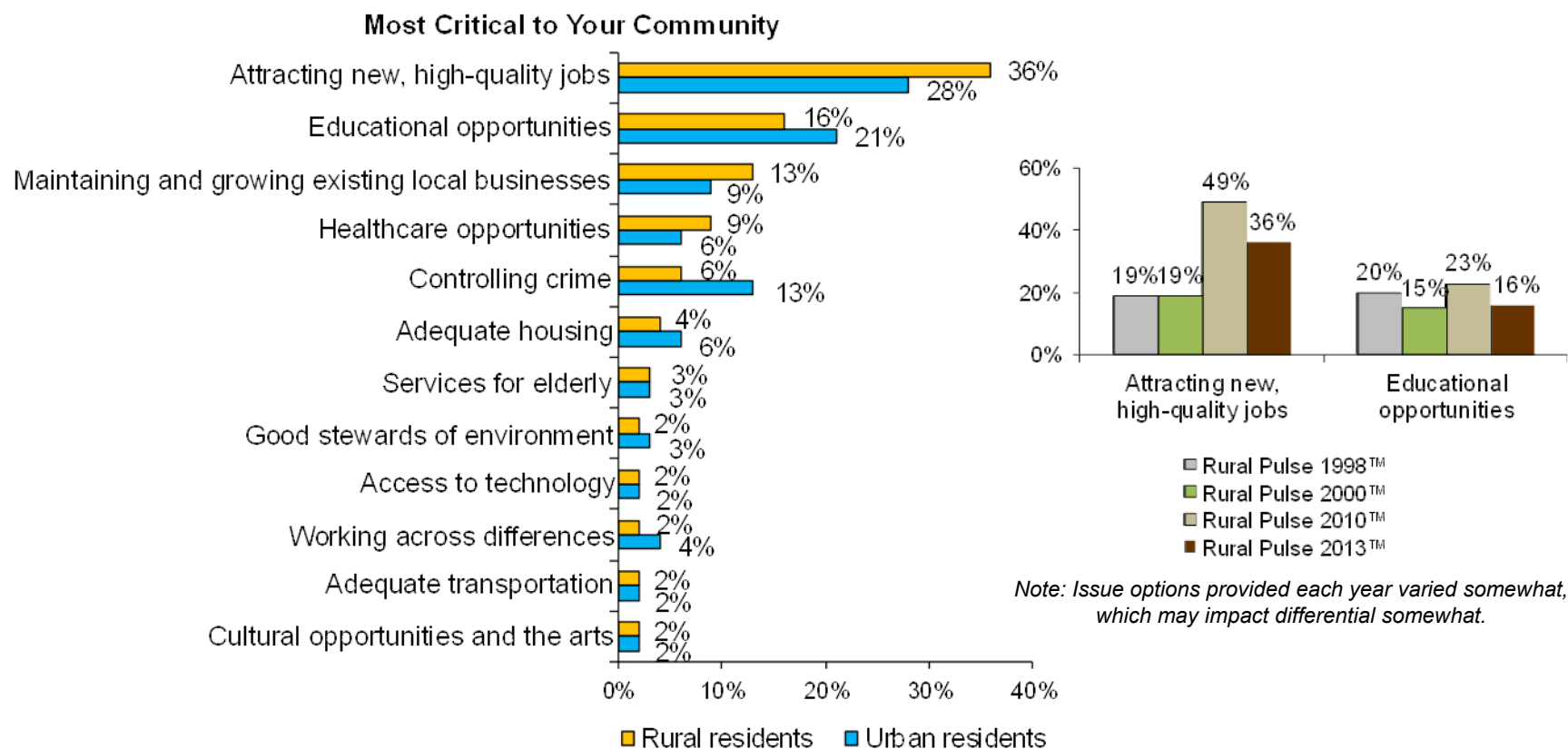


### Condition of Economy is Worse Now Compared to One Year Ago



## Critical Community Issues

The need for attracting new, high-quality jobs continues to be considered the top priority by 36 percent of rural Minnesotans – more than twice as important as the next most important issue: educational opportunities (16%). Urban area residents also considered attracting new, high-quality jobs (28%) and educational opportunities (21%) to be top priorities in their city. Other issues that were seen as critical to some respondents included cultural differences, fracking and mining, and protecting business owners, among others.



Demographically, those ages 25+, with higher incomes and business owners were the most likely to say that attracting new, high-quality jobs is critical to their community.

Rural residents ages 18 to 24 and those with incomes of \$60,001 to \$100,000 were the most likely to say educational opportunities should be the top priority.

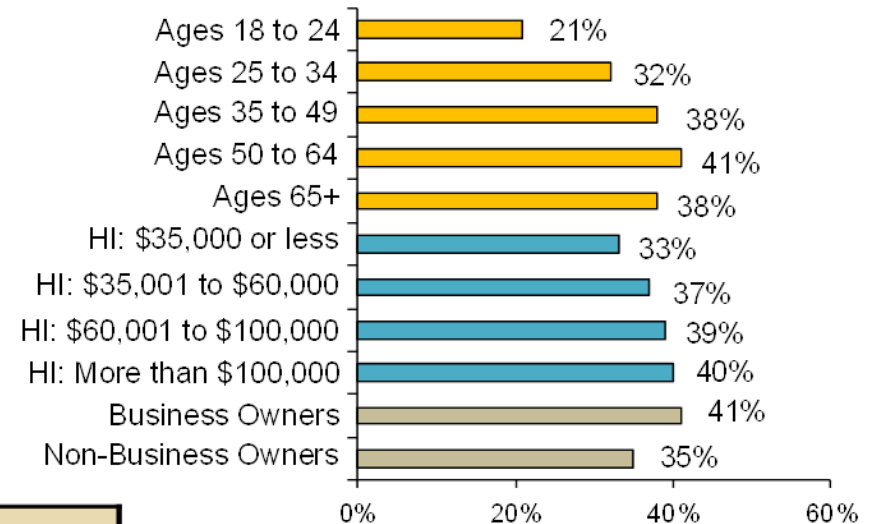
#### Most Critical Issue Other Than Jobs

| Age                                               |       |       |       |       |     |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                                   | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Educational opportunities                         | 27%   | 22%   | 19%   | 11%   | 5%  |
| Maintaining and growing existing local businesses | 17%   | 15%   | 14%   | 12%   | 11% |
| Healthcare opportunities                          | 5%    | 7%    | 7%    | 13%   | 11% |

| Income                                            |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                                   | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Educational opportunities                         | 12%              | 16%                  | 23%                   | 14%                 |
| Maintaining and growing existing local businesses | 10%              | 17%                  | 12%                   | 16%                 |
| Healthcare opportunities                          | 12%              | 10%                  | 5%                    | 6%                  |

■ Highest percentage within issue

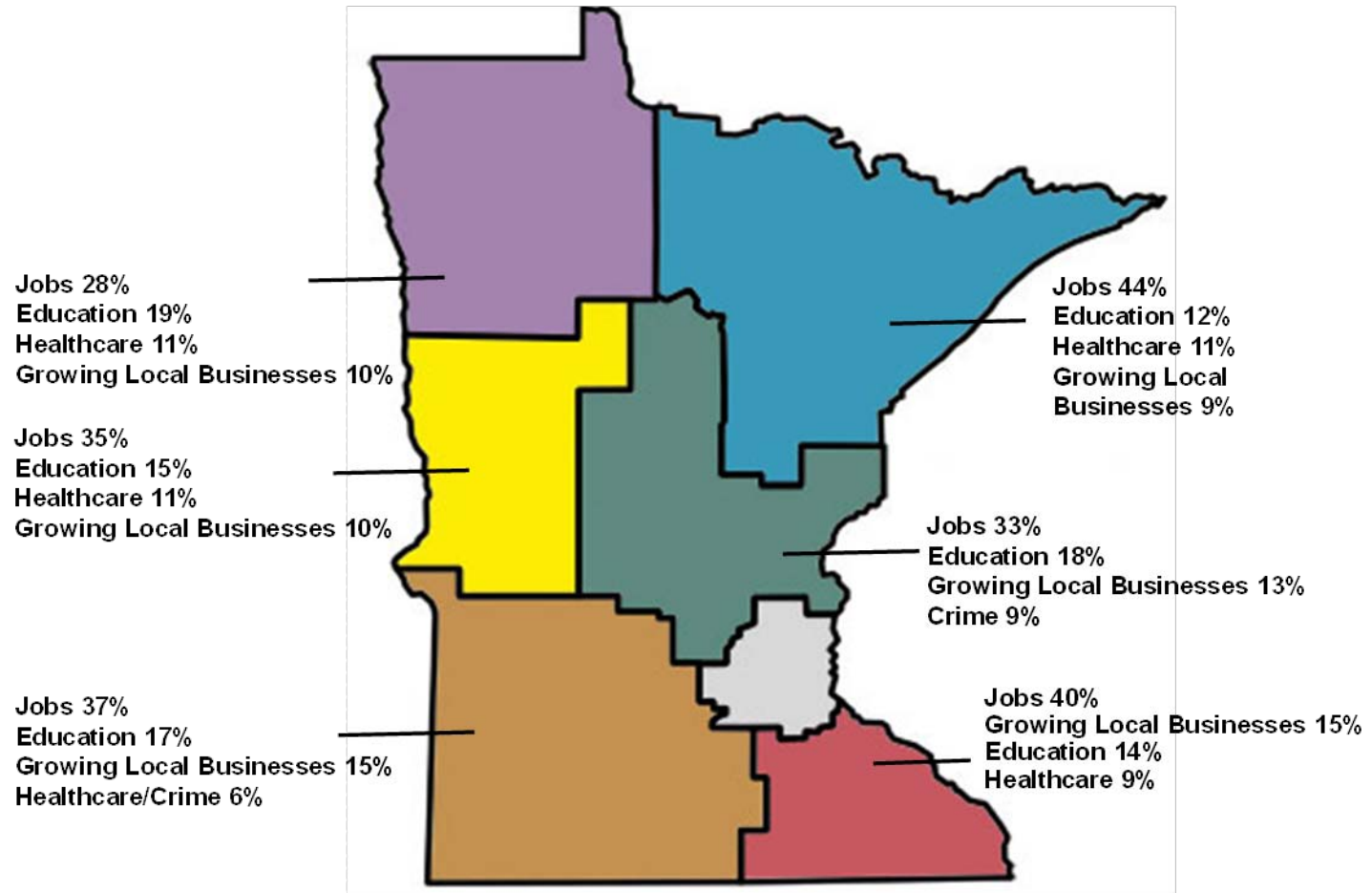
#### Most Critical Issue: Attracting New, High-Quality Jobs





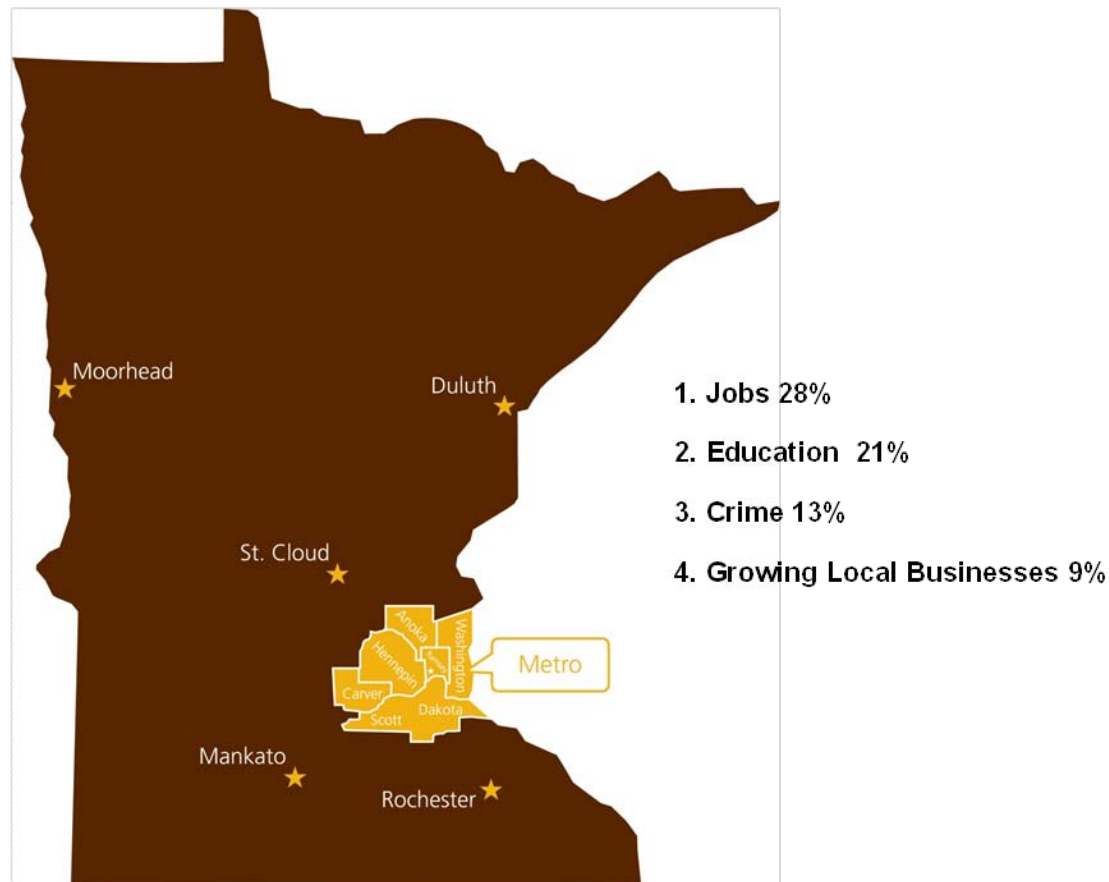
Residents in the Northeast (44%) were the most likely to say attracting new, high-quality jobs is critical to their community, followed by the Southeast (40%) and the Southwest (37%).

### Top Four Concerns of Rural Minnesotans by Region



Attracting new, high-quality jobs was also the issue given greatest priority to urban residents, although to a lesser degree than most rural areas. Urban residents were more likely than rural residents to say educational opportunities (21%) are the most critical issue to address.

### Top Four Concerns of Urban Minnesota Residents

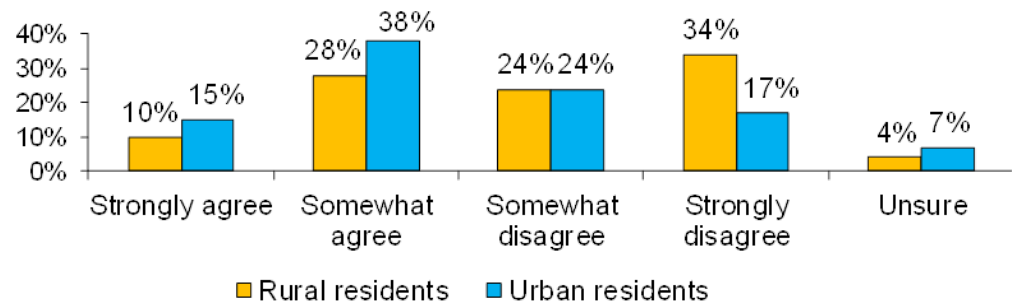


## Jobs Continue to be an Overwhelming Concern

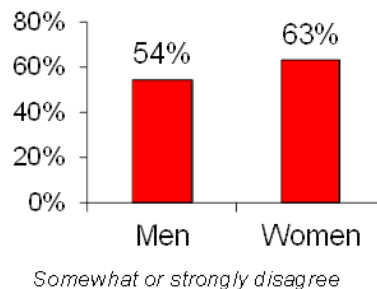
Although concern that there are adequate jobs paying household-supporting wages decreased seven percentage points since Rural Pulse™ 2010, there is still a lack of confidence in the job market. Nearly three in five (58%) rural residents felt that there are not adequate living-wage job opportunities in their community. Urban area residents were less likely to believe that their city does not provide adequate living-wage jobs (41% urban, 58% rural).

Women were more likely than men to feel there is a lack of living-wage jobs in their area (63% women, 54% men). Central Minnesota residents were also the least likely to agree compared to rural Minnesotans overall (69% vs. 58%).

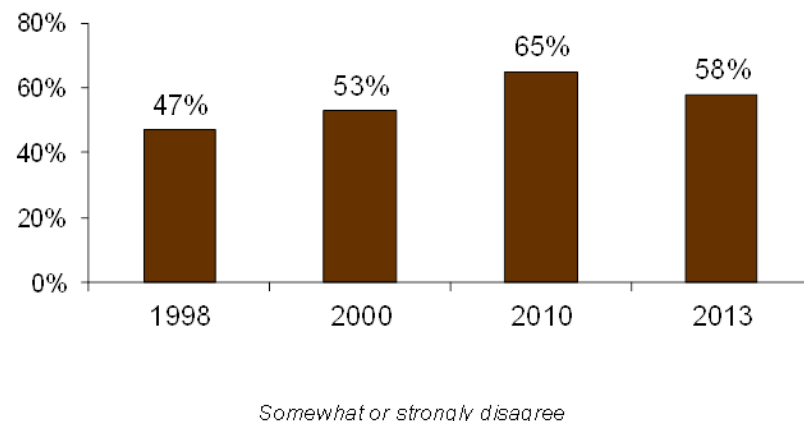
**There are an Adequate Number of Job Opportunities in My Community that Pay Household-Supporting Wages**

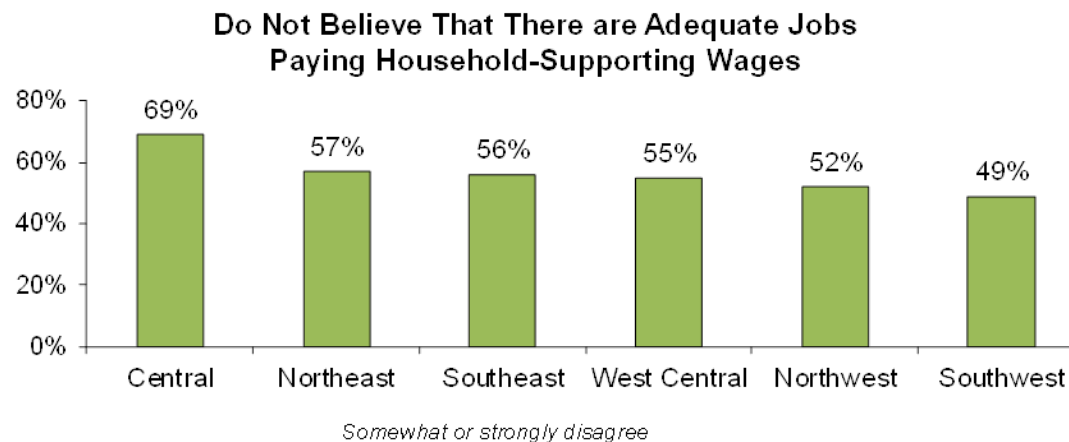


**Do Not Believe That There are Adequate Jobs Paying Household-Supporting Wages**

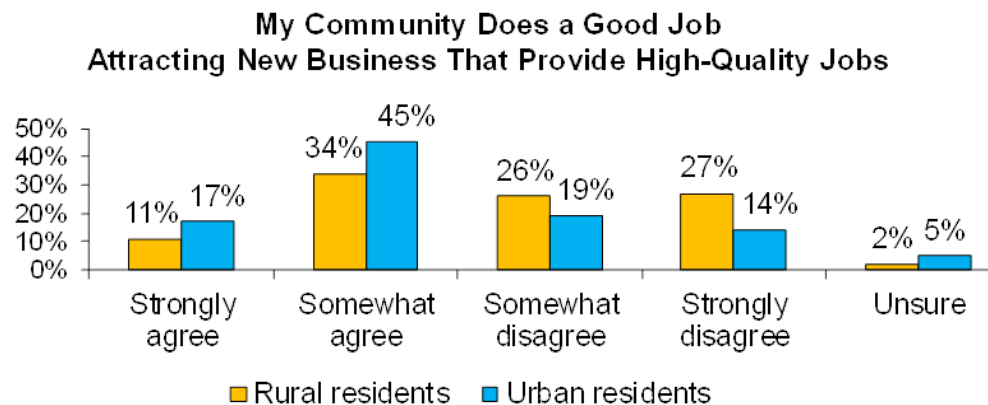


**Do Not Believe That There are Adequate Jobs Paying Household-Supporting Wages**

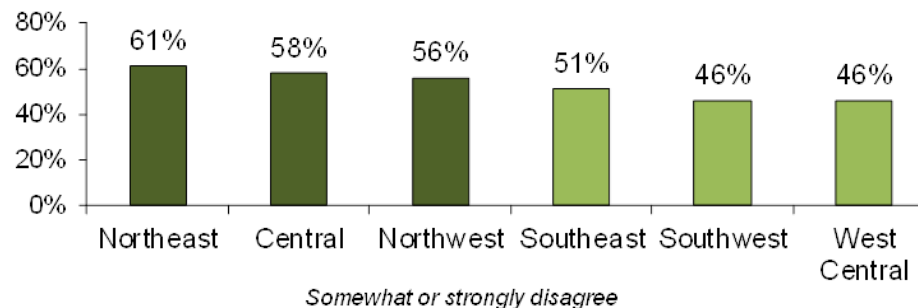
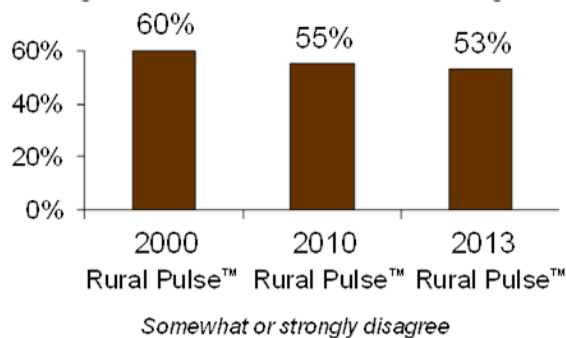




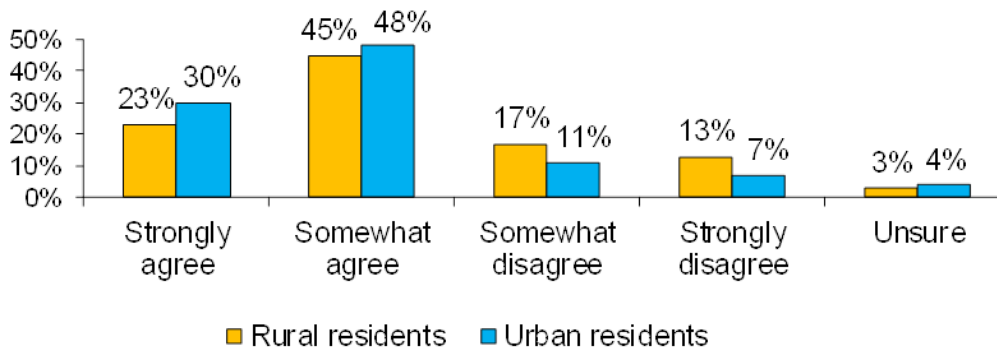
Along with the concern over adequate job opportunities, more than half (53%) of rural Minnesotans – and a third of urban area residents – believed that their community does not do enough to attract new businesses that provide high-quality jobs. Only 45 percent of rural respondents felt positive toward their community’s ability to attract new industry, a sentiment that has not deviated much from 2010.



**Do Not Believe Their Community Does a Good Job  
Attracting New Businesses that Provide High-Quality Jobs**



**My Community Does a Good Job of  
Maintaining and Growing Local Businesses**



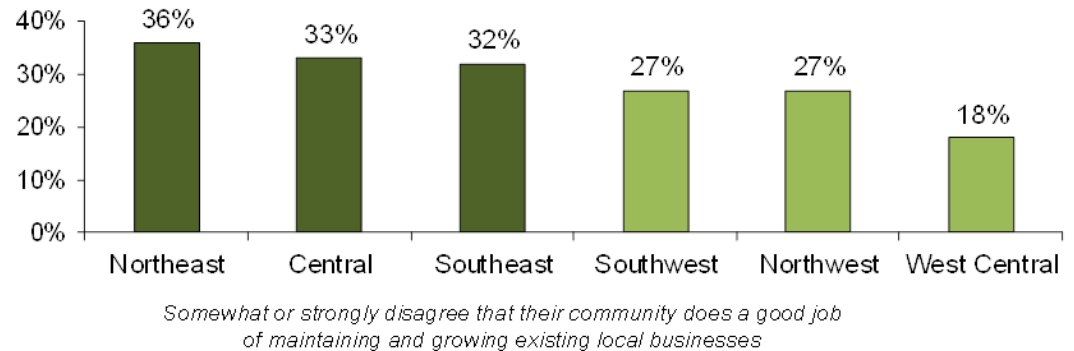
Residents in the Northeast region were the least supportive of their local community's ability to bring in new employment opportunities.

In addition, nearly one in three (30%) rural Minnesotans said they feel their community lacks the ability to maintain and grow existing businesses, although many rural Minnesotans believed that their community does a much better job of maintaining and growing existing business than it does attracting new industry (68% vs. 45%). Urban area residents showed less concern for their city's ability to maintain and grow existing businesses (18%).

Residents in the Northeast region expressed the greatest concern for their community's ability to maintain and grow existing local businesses.

Demographics play a role in how the job and business climate is viewed. Those ages 35 to 64 were the least confident in the adequacy of living-wage jobs and ability of their community to provide an environment to promote job growth.

### Regions with Greatest Concern About Maintaining and Growing Local Businesses



### Do Not Believe Community Provides Adequate Job and Business Opportunities

| Age                                                                                      |       |       |       |       |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                                                                          | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Adequate number of job opportunities in my community that pay household-supporting wages | 44%   | 52%   | 61%   | 67%   | 54% |
| Attracting new businesses that provide high-quality jobs                                 | 44%   | 48%   | 61%   | 56%   | 48% |
| Maintaining and growing existing local businesses                                        | 21%   | 24%   | 35%   | 34%   | 29% |

*Strongly or somewhat disagree*

Across the board, those with the lowest incomes were the least satisfied with job availability and growth.

**Do Not Believe Community Provides Adequate Job and Business Opportunities**

|                                                                                          | Income           |                      |                       |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                                                                          | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Adequate number of job opportunities in my community that pay household-supporting wages | 64%              | 56%                  | 57%                   | 53%                 |
| Attracting new businesses that provide high-quality jobs                                 | 59%              | 51%                  | 50%                   | 49%                 |
| Maintaining and growing existing local businesses                                        | 34%              | 30%                  | 27%                   | 28%                 |

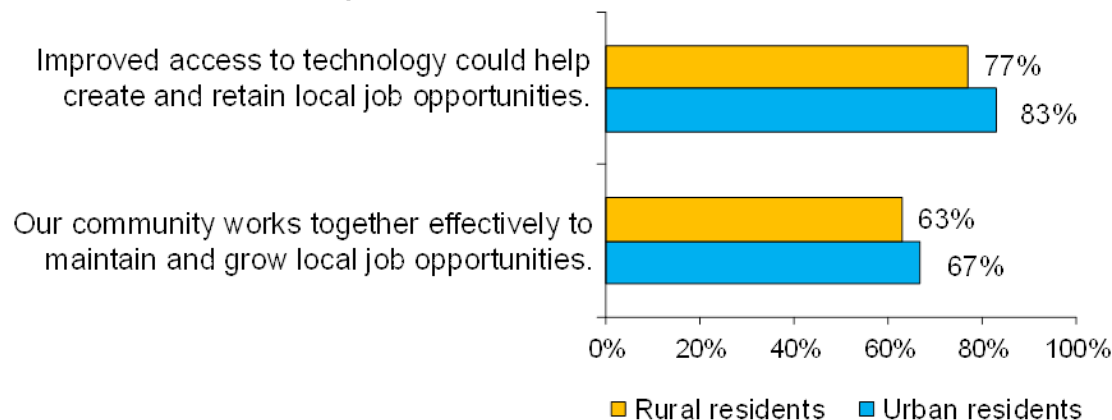
*Strongly or somewhat disagree*

## Job Growth Resources

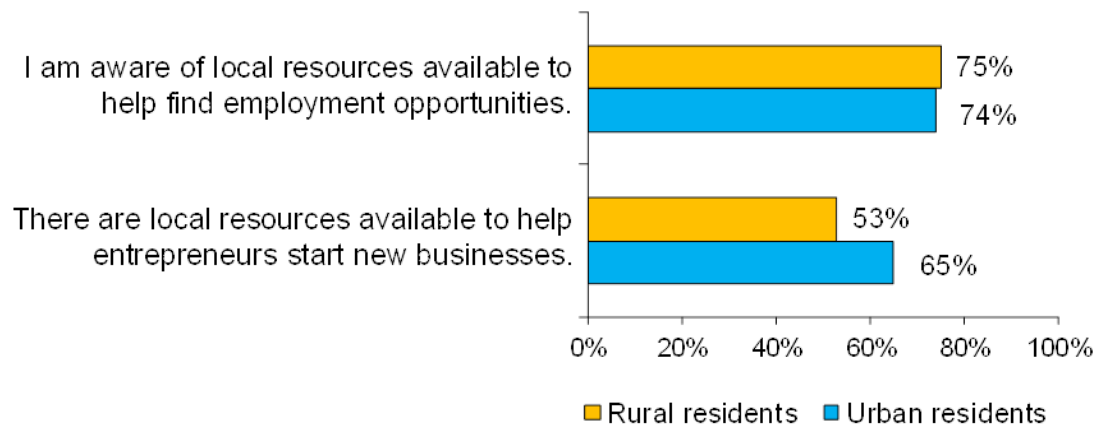
Rural residents are less likely than those in urban areas (77% rural, 83% urban) to believe improved technology could assist with job retention and creation. About two-thirds said they feel their local area works together to maintain and grow job opportunities.

Three in four Minnesota residents said that they are aware of available resources to assist in finding employment. Skepticism exists, however, on whether there are enough local resources available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses, as only about half (53%) of rural Minnesotans – and two-thirds (65%) in urban areas – showed confidence in such.

### Opinions About Local Job Growth



### Awareness of Job Growth Resources





Confidence in local job growth resources varied by age, income and region.

**Opinions About Local Job Growth Resources**


| <b>Age</b>                                                                             |              |              |              |              |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
|                                                                                        | <b>18-24</b> | <b>25-34</b> | <b>35-49</b> | <b>50-64</b> | <b>65+</b> |
| Improved access to technology could help create and retain local job opportunities.    | 88%          | 82%          | 74%          | 76%          | 69%        |
| Our community works together effectively to maintain and grow local job opportunities. | 70%          | 67%          | 56%          | 65%          | 63%        |
| I am aware of local resources available to help find employment opportunities.         | 83%          | 80%          | 77%          | 75%          | 61%        |
| There are local resources available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses.        | 64%          | 57%          | 52%          | 50%          | 54%        |

| <b>Income</b>                                                                          |                         |                             |                              |                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                                                                        | <b>\$35,000 or less</b> | <b>\$35,001 to \$60,000</b> | <b>\$60,001 to \$100,000</b> | <b>More than \$100,000</b> |
| Improved access to technology could help create and retain local job opportunities.    | 77%                     | 81%                         | 74%                          | 81%                        |
| Our community works together effectively to maintain and grow local job opportunities. | 59%                     | 64%                         | 63%                          | 70%                        |
| I am aware of local resources available to help find employment opportunities.         | 72%                     | 79%                         | 74%                          | 81%                        |
| There are local resources available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses.        | 48%                     | 58%                         | 55%                          | 55%                        |

■ Lowest agreement

**Opinions About Local Job Growth Resources**

|                                                                                        | <b>Southwest</b> | <b>Southeast</b> | <b>Central</b> | <b>West Central</b> | <b>Northwest</b> | <b>Northeast</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Improved access to technology could help create and retain local job opportunities.    | 81%              | 74%              | 73%            | 84%                 | 84%              | 73%              |
| Our community works together effectively to maintain and grow local job opportunities. | 70%              | 62%              | 58%            | 67%                 | 67%              | 62%              |
| I am aware of local resources available to help find employment opportunities.         | 71%              | 77%              | 70%            | 84%                 | 75%              | 81%              |
| There are local resources available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses.        | 64%              | 56%              | 46%            | 53%                 | 52%              | 53%              |

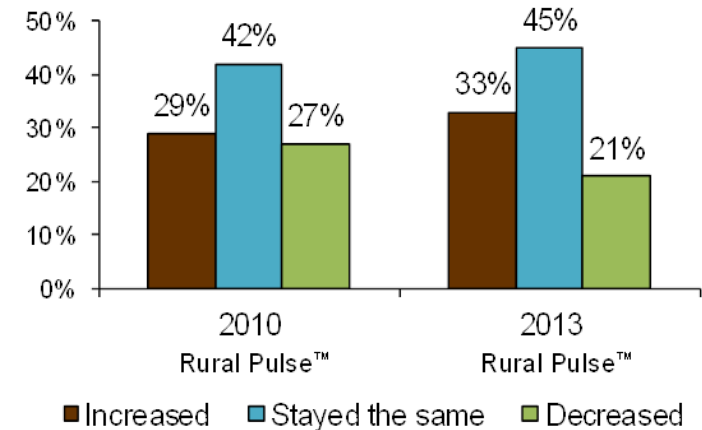
 Lowest agreement

## Impact of the Economy on Families

While a third of rural Minnesotans said that their household income has increased over the past year, many households are still struggling with a decrease in wages (21%), although to a slightly lesser degree compared to Rural Pulse 2010. Forty-five percent said their household income had not changed in the past 12 months.

Those most likely to be feeling negative financial impact were those with lower incomes and ages 35+.

**Change in Household Income Over Past Year**



| Age             |       |       |       |       |     |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                 | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Increased       | 28%   | 49%   | 35%   | 30%   | 16% |
| Stayed the same | 53%   | 34%   | 44%   | 44%   | 59% |
| Decreased       | 16%   | 17%   | 21%   | 24%   | 22% |

| Income          |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                 | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Increased       | 16%              | 32%                  | 58%                   | 61%                 |
| Stayed the same | 53%              | 46%                  | 30%                   | 30%                 |
| Decreased       | 31%              | 22%                  | 12%                   | 9%                  |

■ Highest within response

|                 | Male | Female |
|-----------------|------|--------|
| Increased       | 38%  | 28%    |
| Stayed the same | 41%  | 49%    |
| Decreased       | 21%  | 22%    |

In addition, residents in the Central region and rural business owners were the most likely to say their income has declined.

More specifically, 12 percent of rural residents – and 17 percent in urban areas – said that someone in their household has lost a job. Rural residents most likely to have experienced such a loss were those with household incomes of \$35,000 or less.

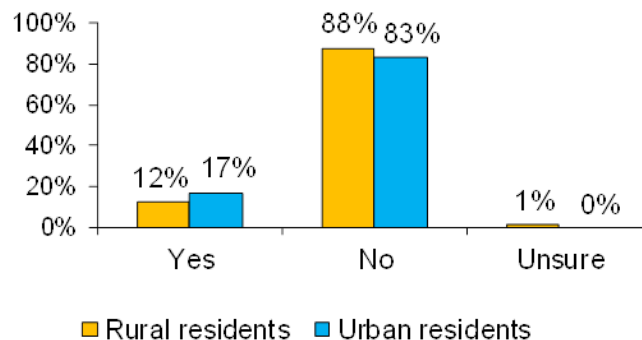
**Change in Household Income Over Past Year**

|                 | Southwest | Southeast | Central | West Central | Northwest | Northeast |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Increased       | 36%       | 32%       | 33%     | 33%          | 34%       | 26%       |
| Stayed the same | 44%       | 46%       | 39%     | 47%          | 45%       | 56%       |
| Decreased       | 17%       | 20%       | 27%     | 18%          | 20%       | 18%       |

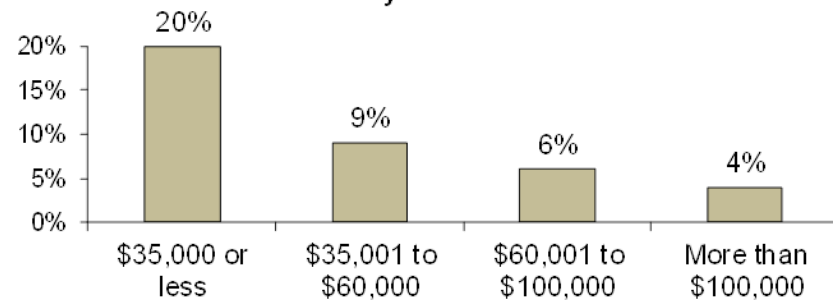
|                 | Business Owners | Non-Business Owners |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Increased       | 39%             | 32%                 |
| Stayed the same | 33%             | 48%                 |
| Decreased       | 28%             | 20%                 |

■ Highest within response

**Someone In Household Has Lost a Job Within Past Year**



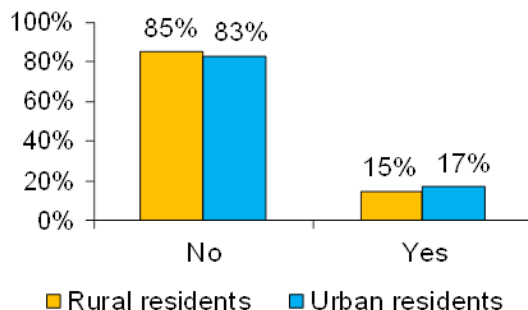
**Recent Job Loss within Household by Income**



## Migration

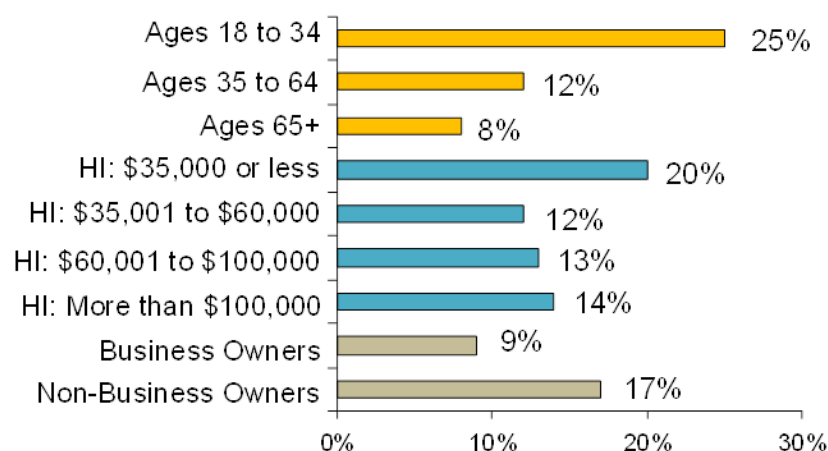
Fifteen percent of rural Minnesotans indicated that they have considered leaving their community for a larger city/metro area within the past two years. One in four of those ages 18 to 34 – and one in five of those with the lowest incomes – said that they have contemplated such a move. Those in Northeastern Minnesota were more inclined than others to consider moving to a metropolitan area.

**Have Considered Moving to a Different Locale Within Past Two Years**

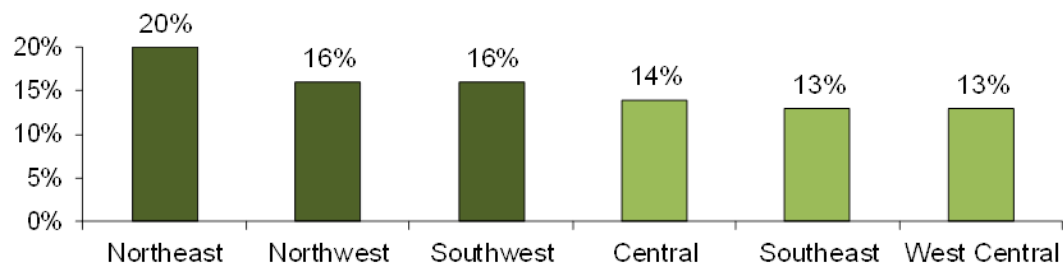


*Rural residents: considered moving to a larger city or metropolitan area  
Metro residents: considered moving to a less-populated rural area*

**Considered Moving to Larger City or Metropolitan Area Within Past Two Years**

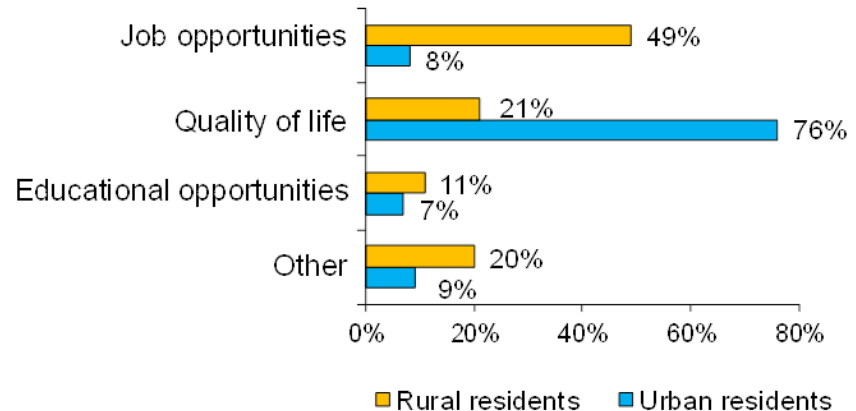


**Considered Moving to Larger City or Metropolitan Area Within Past Two Years**



Of those who have considered a move, about half (49%) of rural residents, compared to only eight percent of those in urban areas, said it would be to pursue job opportunities. Quality of life was cited as the main factor for 21 percent of rural residents and 76 percent of urban area residents. Education was also cited by some as a consideration for a potential move (11% rural, 7% urban). Other responses included being closer to family and gas prices, among others. Those ages 35 to 64, as well as those with the highest incomes, were the most likely to have said job opportunities are the reason they have considered making a move away from their rural community.

### Main Reason for Considering Moving to Locale that Differs in Population



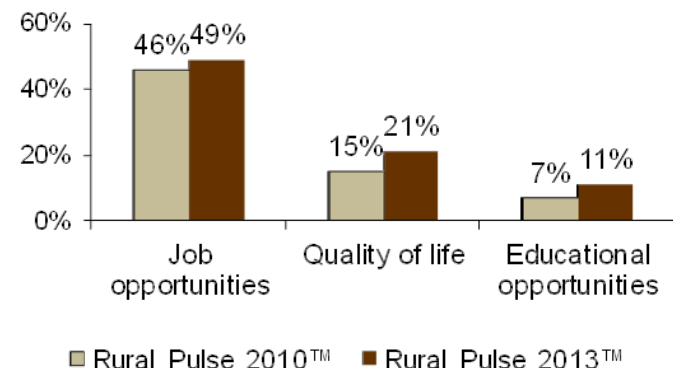
### Main Reason for Considering Moving to Larger City or Metropolitan Area

| Age                       |       |       |     |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                           | 18-34 | 35-64 | 65+ |
| Job opportunities         | 48%   | 56%   | 21% |
| Quality of life           | 20%   | 18%   | 42% |
| Educational opportunities | 11%   | 13%   | 0%  |

| Income                    |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                           | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Job opportunities         | 47%              | 46%                  | 56%                   | 71%                 |
| Quality of life           | 25%              | 22%                  | 18%                   | 7%                  |
| Educational opportunities | 8%               | 15%                  | 13%                   | 0%                  |

■ Highest percentage within reason cited

### Main Reason for Considering Moving to Larger City or Metropolitan Area



Regionally, Southeast and Central residents were the most likely to be considering a move to locate employment.

Looking forward, 13 percent of rural Minnesotans – and 19 percent of urban area residents – said they do not expect to be living in their current locale five years from now.

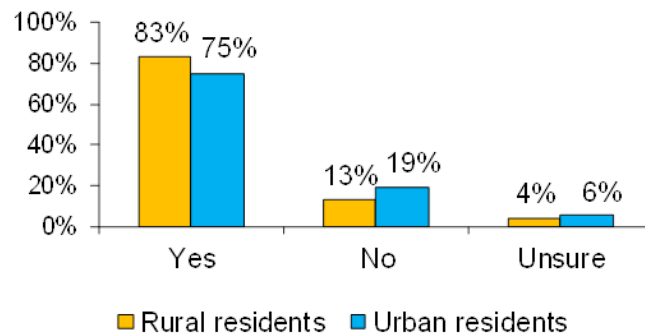
Notably among rural Minnesotans, 22 percent of those ages 18 to 34 and lower-income residents (17%) said that they would likely relocate.

### Main Reason for Considering Moving to Larger City or Metropolitan Area

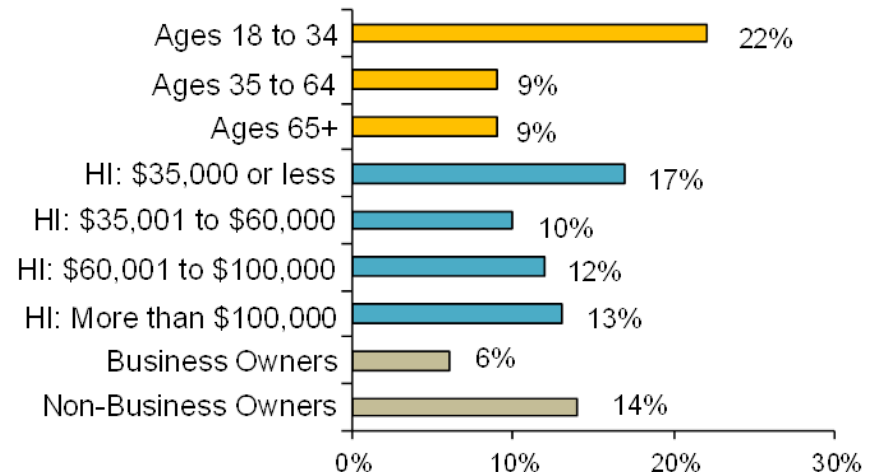
|                           | Southwest | Southeast | Central | West Central | Northwest | Northeast |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Job opportunities         | 38%       | 55%       | 55%     | 54%          | 46%       | 39%       |
| Quality of life           | 30%       | 21%       | 10%     | 31%          | 28%       | 17%       |
| Educational opportunities | 7%        | 14%       | 11%     | 8%           | 26%       | 21%       |

■ Highest percentage within reason cited

### Expect to Live in Same Community Five Years From Now



### Do Not Expect to Live in Same Community Five Years From Now

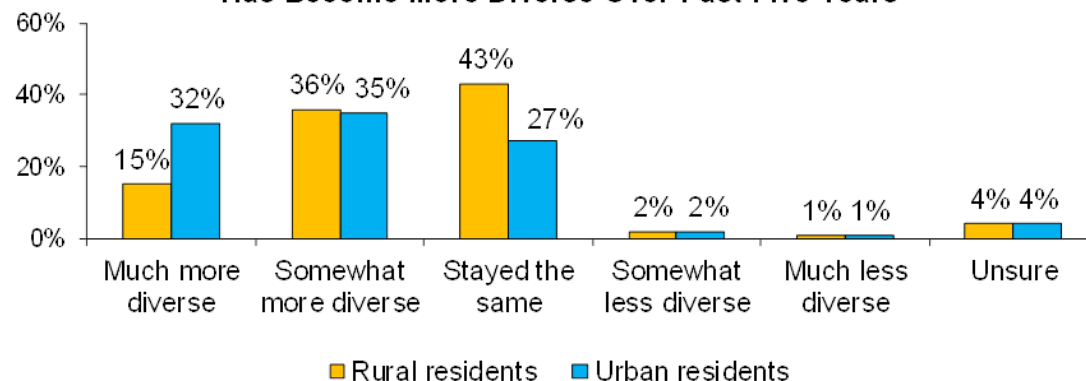


## A Changing Landscape

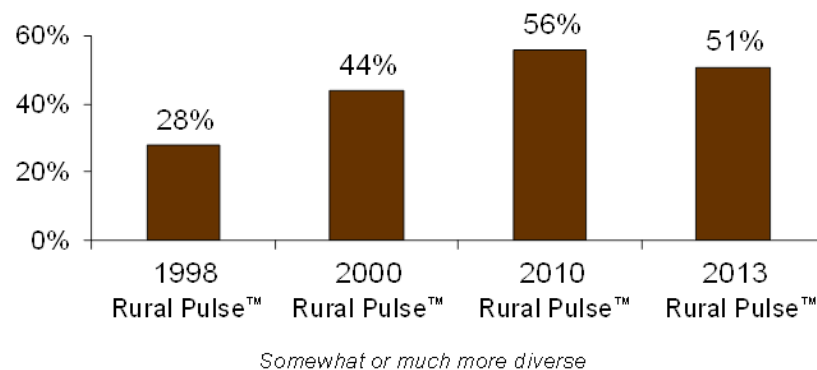
Half of rural residents felt their community's ethnic or racial makeup has become more diverse over the past five years. In fact, 51 percent agreed with this, versus 43 percent who said it has stayed the same. While findings have shown that diversity in population has continued over the years through these studies, 2013 findings showed a slight decrease from 2010.

Urban residents were more likely than their rural counterparts to feel the population has diversified in recent years.

**My Community's Ethnic or Racial Make-Up Has Become More Diverse Over Past Five Years**

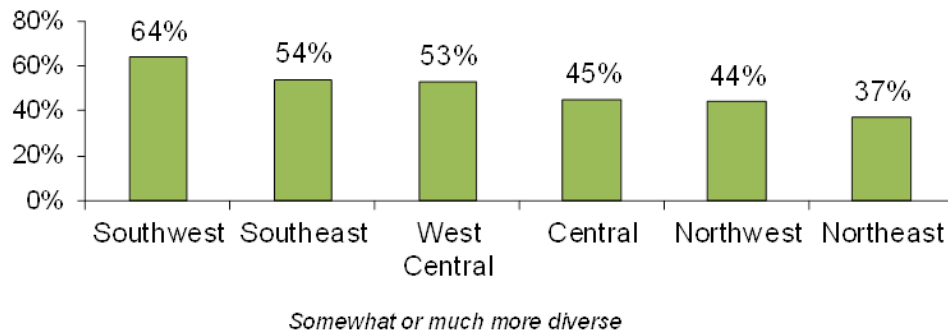


**Population Has Become More Diverse Over Past Five Years**





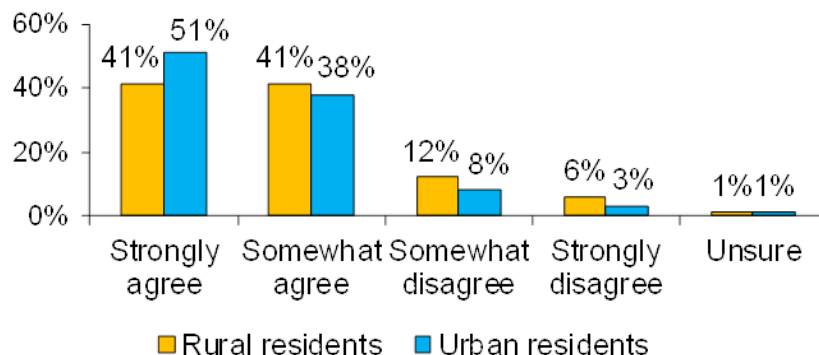
### Population Has Become More Diverse Over Past Five Years



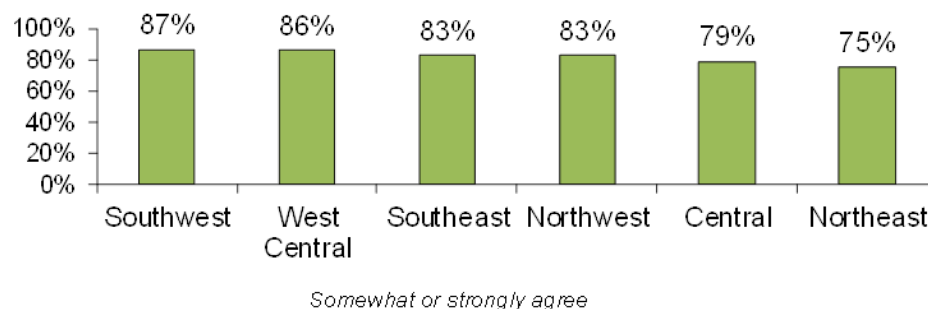
Those in southern Minnesota were most likely to have felt their population is more diverse, especially in the Southwest region.

Though there is belief that diversity is increasing in rural Minnesota, 18 percent did not feel their community is welcoming to people of varying backgrounds and perspectives. Most (82%), however, said that they feel their community is inviting, compared to 89 percent of urban residents who said that they feel that way. Those in Northeastern Minnesota were the least likely to agree.

### My Community is a Welcoming Place for People of All Backgrounds and Perspectives



### Believe Community is Welcoming Place for People of All Backgrounds and Perspectives

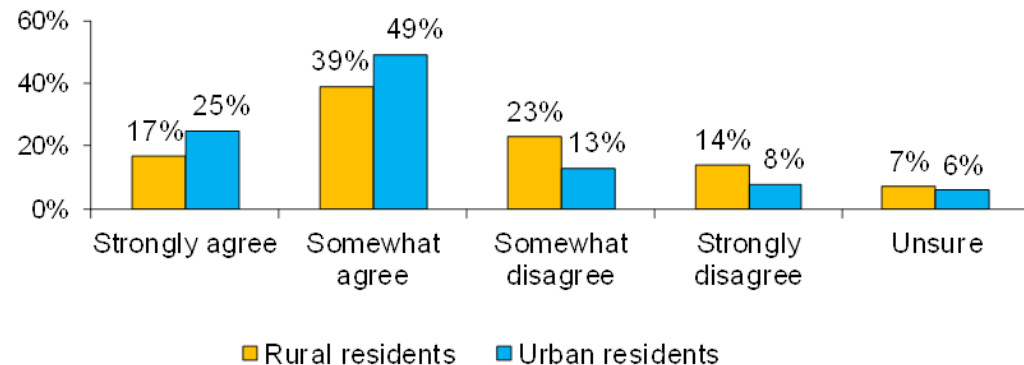


## Leadership Composition

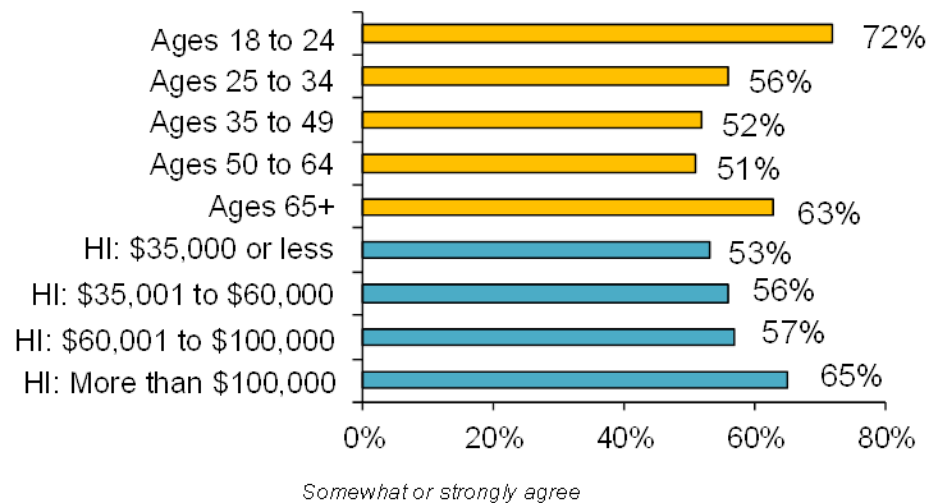
While more than half (56%) of rural residents said that they feel local community leadership is comprised of people from different backgrounds, 37 percent felt that this is not the case. Urban residents were much more likely than their rural counterparts to agree (74% urban, 56% rural).

Younger residents – those ages 18 to 24 – were the most confident in local leadership inclusiveness, while those with lower incomes (\$35,000 or less) were the least likely to believe this was evident.

**People from Different Backgrounds Fill Leadership Roles**



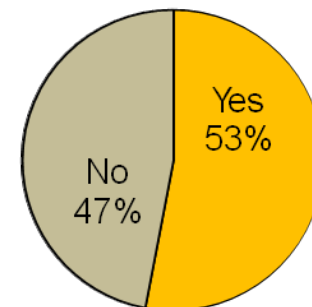
**Agree That People from Different Backgrounds Fill Leadership Roles**



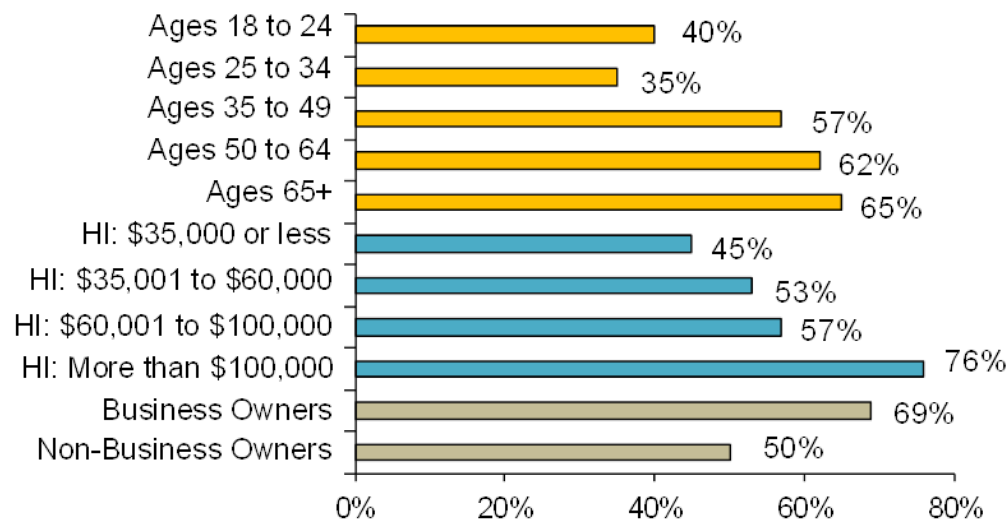
Interestingly, while many rural Minnesotans said that they believe that leadership in their community is inclusive, 47 percent said that they have not served in a leadership role, whether it be youth sports, city government or with a local nonprofit organization in the past.

Demographics clearly appear to play a role in the likelihood to serve. Older residents, those with higher incomes and business owners were the most likely to say that they have served in leadership.

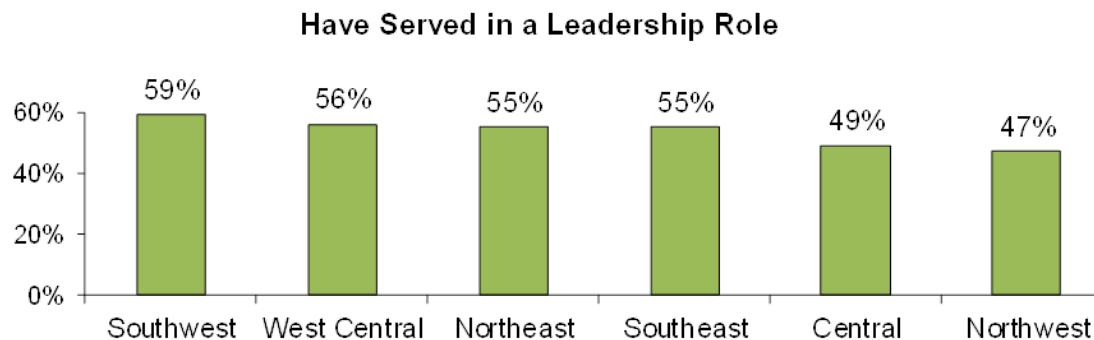
**Served in a Leadership Role within Community**



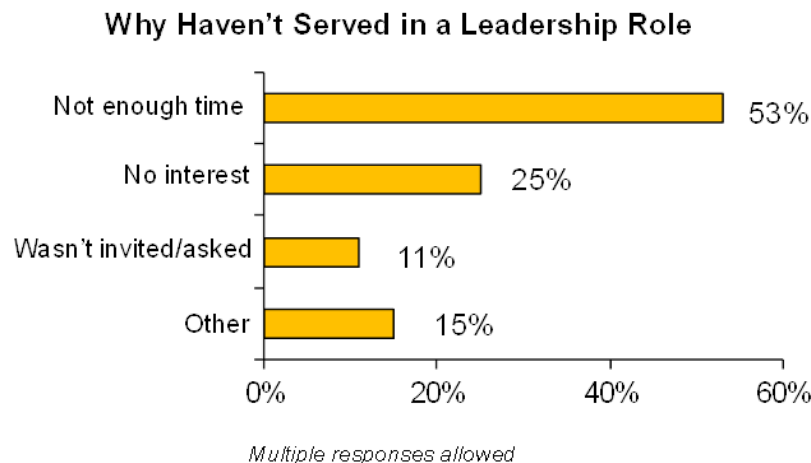
**Have Served in a Leadership Role**



Residents in the Northwest region were the least likely rural Minnesotans to say that they have served in a leadership role.



More than half (53%) who had not served as a leader said that the main reason was lack of time. One in four said they would have no interest in doing such. About one in 10 (11%) have never been invited to participate as a leader. Another 15 percent cited other reasons such as age or a disability, among others.



Reasons cited for not serving in a leadership role varied by age, income, region and whether or not the survey respondent was a business owner. Other respondents cited age and health issues that deter them from leadership positions, among others.

### Why Haven't Served in a Leadership Role

| Age                  |       |       |       |       |     |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                      | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Not enough time      | 46%   | 56%   | 60%   | 56%   | 38% |
| No interest          | 19%   | 24%   | 23%   | 30%   | 21% |
| Wasn't invited/asked | 15%   | 10%   | 10%   | 5%    | 17% |

| Income               |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                      | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| Not enough time      | 44%              | 60%                  | 58%                   | 68%                 |
| No interest          | 28%              | 23%                  | 22%                   | 13%                 |
| Wasn't invited/asked | 12%              | 11%                  | 10%                   | 4%                  |

|                 | Business Owner | Non-Business Owner |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Not enough time | 64%            | 51%                |
| No interest     | 14%            | 27%                |

|                 | Southwest | Southeast | Central | West Central | Northwest | Northeast |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Not enough time | 59%       | 52%       | 52%     | 46%          | 62%       | 44%       |
| No interest     | 28%       | 25%       | 27%     | 23%          | 16%       | 25%       |

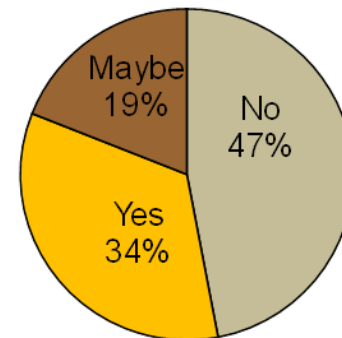
*Multiple responses allowed*

■ Highest percentage for each reason cited

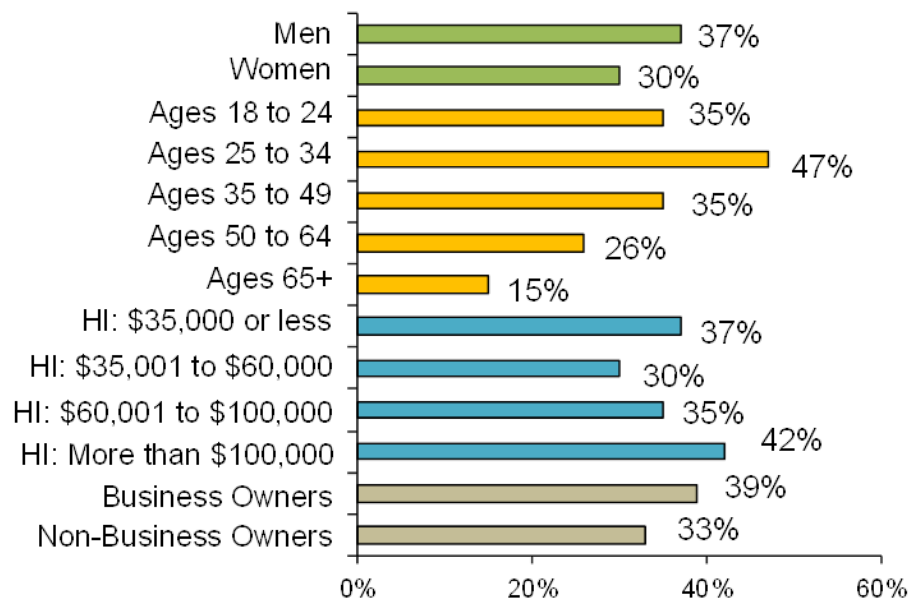
Although many had not served in a leadership role within their community to date, there was interest in doing so. A third (34%) indicated that they would be interested in being invited to serve, and another 19 percent said they might consider doing so. Forty-seven percent said that they have no interest.

Gender, age, income and whether or not the person owns a business played a role in consideration of leadership. Men, those ages 25 to 34, those with the highest incomes and business owners were the most likely to say they would consider a leadership role.

**If You Have Not Served in a Leadership Role, Would You Consider Doing So If Asked?**

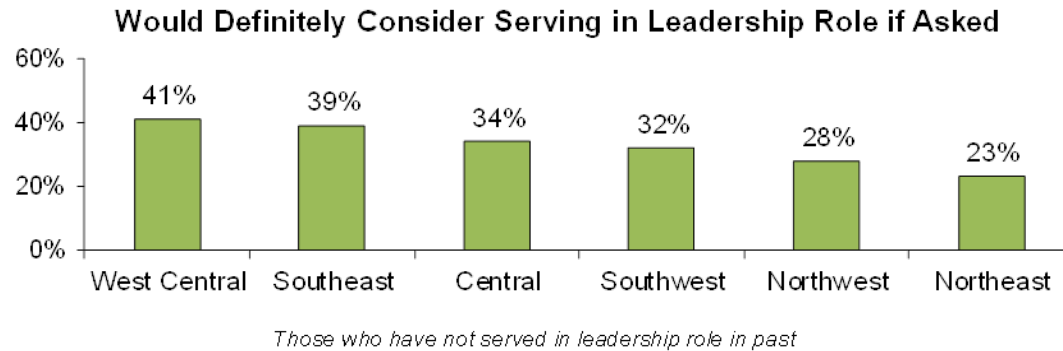


**Would Definitely Consider Serving in Leadership Role if Asked**



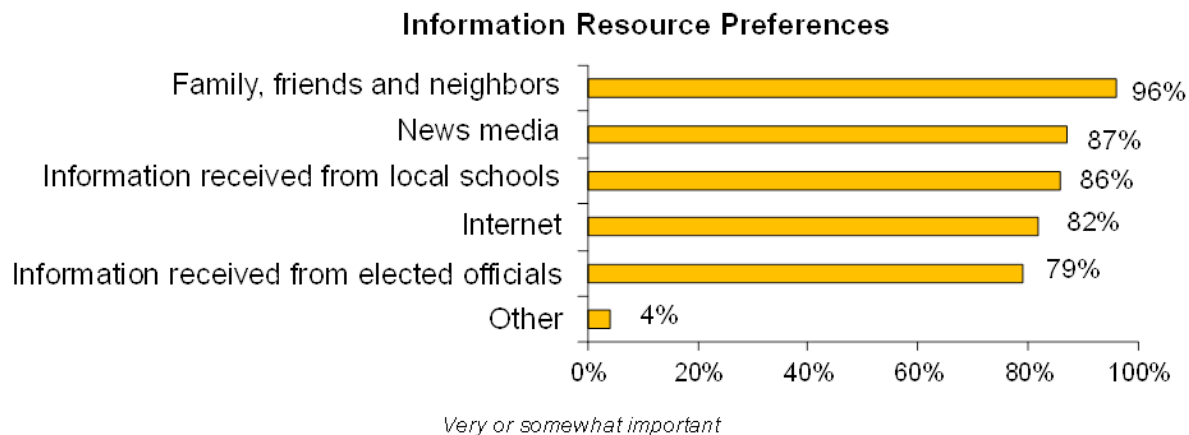
*Those who have not served in leadership role in past*

Residents of West Central Minnesota also were more likely to say that they would consider serving in a leadership role, compared to other rural regions.



## Information Source Preferences

When asked about preferences for information sources, rural Minnesotans said that they rely heavily on family, friends and neighbors to keep them updated about their local area. Other top information sources included the news media (87%), information received from local schools (86%), the Internet (82%) and information received from elected officials (79%). Other sources cited included community events, social media and newsletters, among others.



Preferred information sources varied by gender, age, income and region.

**Importance of Information Resources**

|                                    | Male | Female |
|------------------------------------|------|--------|
| Information from elected officials | 74%  | 82%    |

*Very or somewhat important*

Highest percentage within gender, age or income group




**Importance of Information Resources**

| Age                                     |       |       |       |       |     |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                         | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| News media                              | 86%   | 87%   | 83%   | 89%   | 90% |
| Information received from local schools | 88%   | 90%   | 90%   | 83%   | 80% |
| Internet                                | 90%   | 88%   | 84%   | 84%   | 64% |

| Income                                      |                  |                      |                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|                                             | \$35,000 or less | \$35,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 to \$100,000 | More than \$100,000 |
| News media                                  | 85%              | 90%                  | 85%                   | 92%                 |
| Information received from local schools     | 82%              | 89%                  | 91%                   | 88%                 |
| Internet                                    | 77%              | 84%                  | 88%                   | 92%                 |
| Information received from elected officials | 75%              | 82%                  | 83%                   | 78%                 |

|                                             | Southwest | Southeast | Central | West Central | Northwest | Northeast |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| News media                                  | 92%       | 89%       | 83%     | 88%          | 87%       | 89%       |
| Information received from local schools     | 91%       | 88%       | 84%     | 89%          | 83%       | 81%       |
| Internet                                    | 85%       | 82%       | 82%     | 82%          | 81%       | 81%       |
| Information received from elected officials | 83%       | 79%       | 77%     | 81%          | 77%       | 73%       |

*Very or somewhat important*

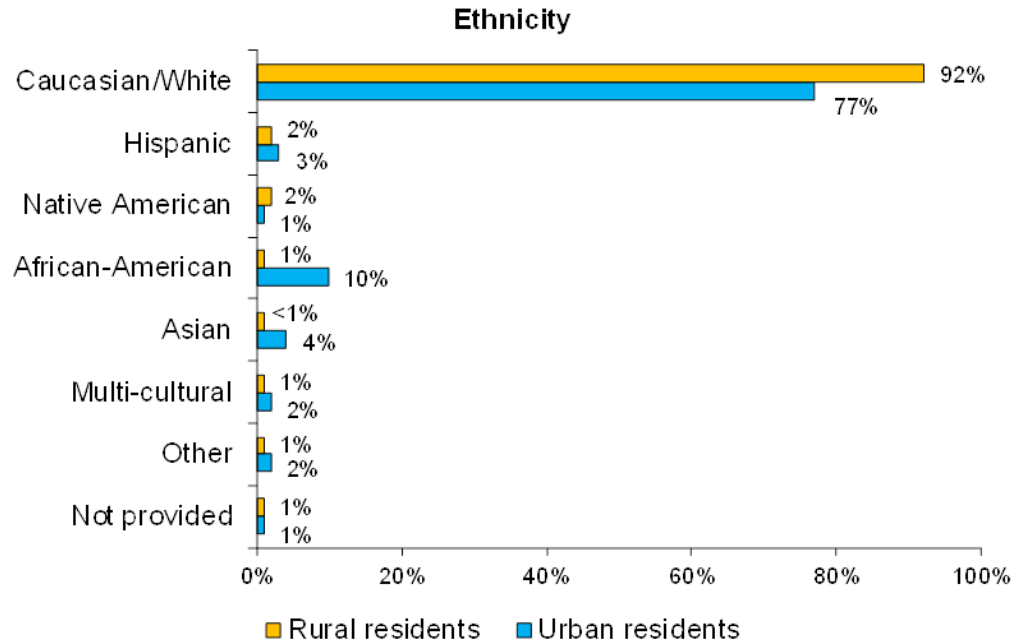
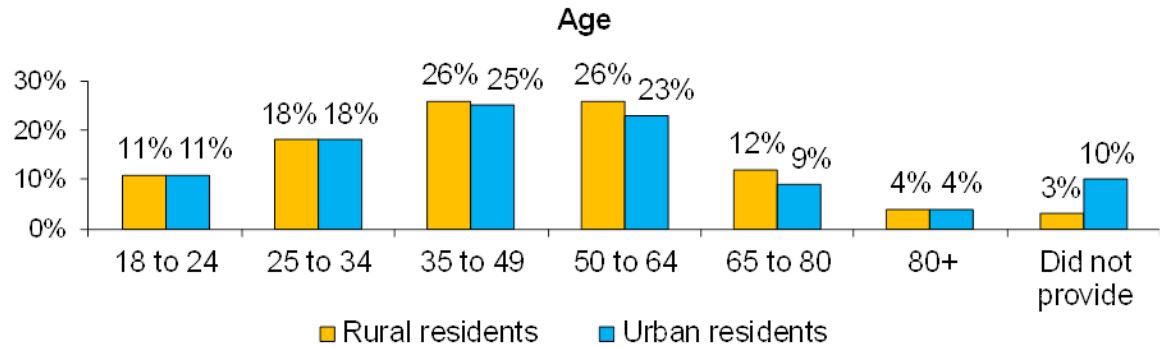
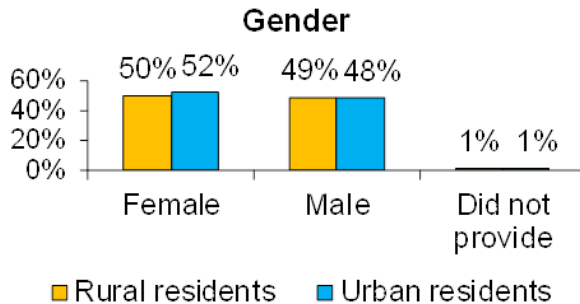
 Highest percentage within age or income group

# Demographics

Twenty-nine percent of rural Minnesota respondents were age 18 to 34, 52 percent were age 35 to 64 and 16 percent self-identified themselves as age 65 or older. Three percent did not provide age information.

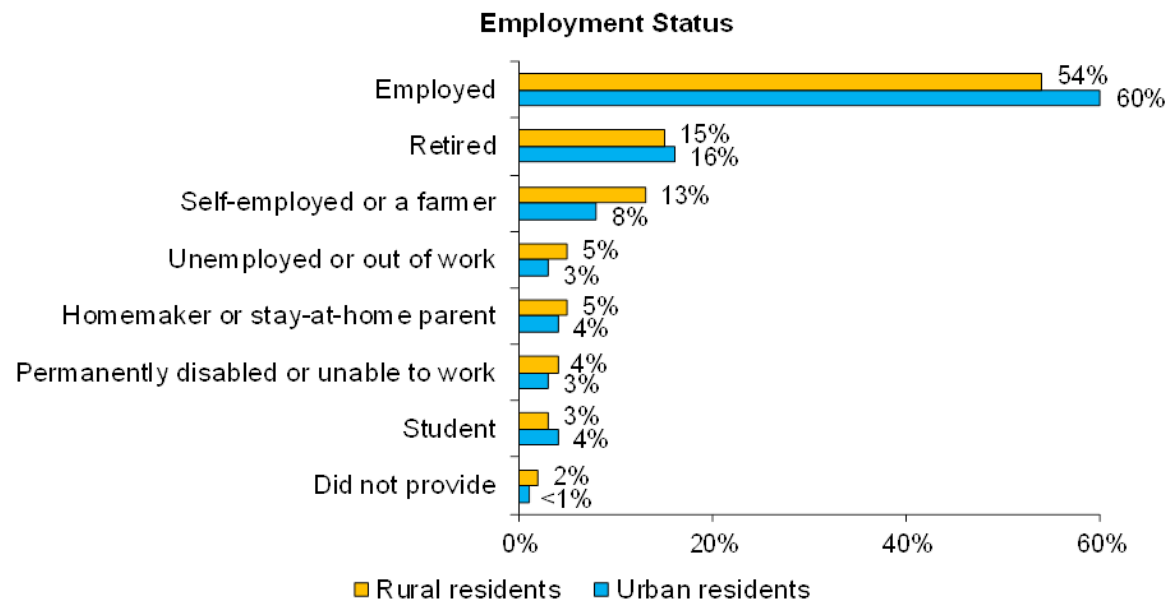
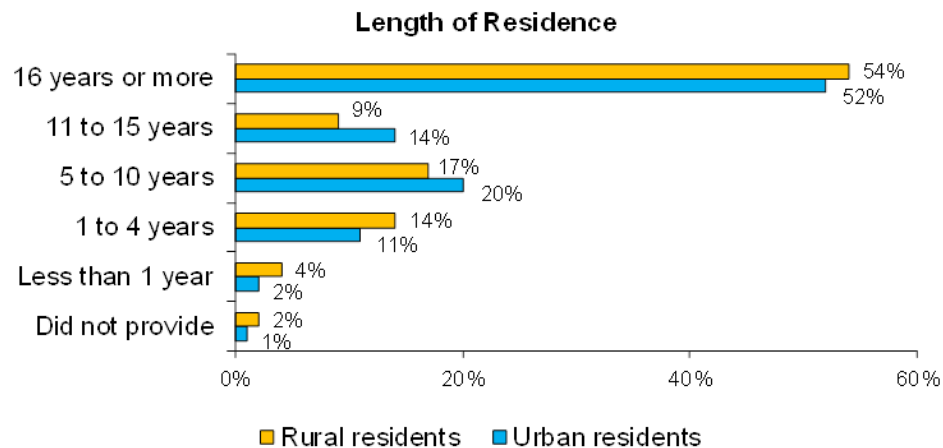
Gender was nearly equally represented, with 50 percent women and 49 percent men. One percent did not choose to disclose their gender.

Nine in 10 (92%) rural respondents were Caucasian. Other ethnicities included Hispanic and Native American (2% each); African-American (1%); Asian (less than 1%); and one percent were other nationalities. Another one percent considered themselves multi-cultural, while one percent did not provide this information.



More than half (54%) of rural respondents said that they have lived in their community for 16 years or more, followed by five to 10 years (17%), 11 to 15 years (9%), one to four years (14%), and less than one year (4%). Two percent did not provide this information.

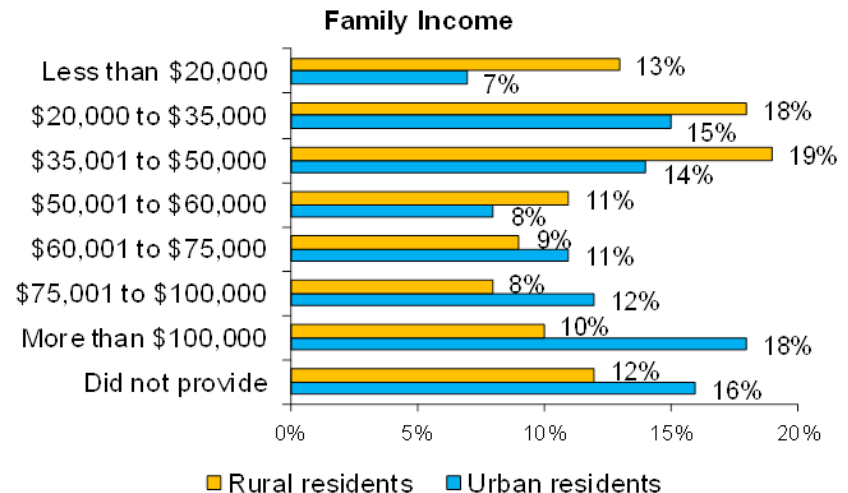
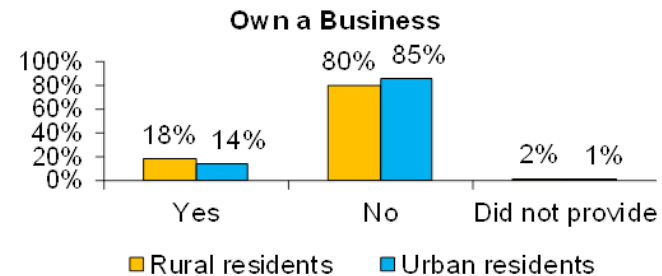
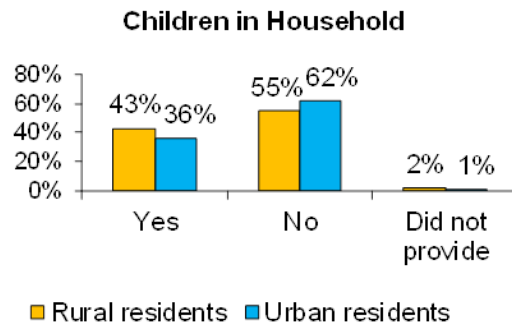
Just over half (54%) of rural Minnesotans said they are employed and 13 percent noted self-employment or farming. For those who said they do not work, 15 percent said they were retired, five percent each were unemployed or homemakers, four percent cited a permanent disability or that they were unable to work for another reason and three percent were students. Two percent did not provide employment information.



Nearly two in five (18%) rural respondents said they own a business of some type.

Half of rural Minnesotans surveyed cited their family income as \$50,000 or less. Another 20 percent reported \$50,001 to \$75,000 and 18 percent said their household income is more than \$75,000. Twelve percent did not provide income information.

About two in five rural Minnesotans (43%) noted that at least one child 18-years-old or younger resides in their household.



Two in five rural respondents said the community they live in, or nearest to, has a population of between 500 and 4,999 people. Another 25 percent cited a population size of 5,000 to 14,999, followed by less than 500 (16%), 15,000 to 24,999 (9%), and 25,000 to 34,999 (5%). Six percent were unsure.

About three in 10 (29%) rural respondents said that they reside in the Central region of the state, followed by Southeast (24%), Southwest (17%), Northeast (11%) and 10 percent each in West Central and Northwest.

